United Nations A/61/499

General Assembly

Distr.: General
6 October 2006

Original: English

Sixty-first session
Agenda item 121
Pattern of conferences

Pattern of conferences

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/61/129). In the course of its review of the report, the Advisory Committee also took into account the information contained in the report on the impact of the capital master plan on meetings to be held at Headquarters during its implementation (A/61/300). During its consideration of the report, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarifications.

2. The report on the pattern of conferences covers matters related to integrated global management, meetings management, proactive document management, translation and interpretation. The Secretary-General puts forward a number of proposals on the servicing of meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States, timely submission of documents, control and limitation of documentation, dynamic prioritization of document processing, training of language staff and improvement in the quality of the language services.

3. The Committee notes from paragraph 2 of the report that progress has been made in the project on integrated global management of conference services. The main goal of integrated global management is harmonizing/standardizing business processes across duty stations for the purposes of streamlining and optimizing operations, better sharing of resources and workload and achieving economies of scale. As indicated in the report, common approaches to administrative policies, practices and procedures were identified and harmonized/standardized in a cooperative venture involving the four duty stations of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management at New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi.

4. The Committee observes from the report of the Secretary-General that at the Seventh Coordination Meeting of Conference Managers, held at Vienna in June 2006, new agreement was reached in such areas as the following: (a) proactive document management; (b) capacity calculations; (c) a common terminology

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database for language staff, and (d) computer-assisted translation. The four duty stations agreed to encourage the use of computer-assisted translation (CAT) and to increase the proportion of documents translated with such technology. Each duty station would identify both the documents of a repetitive nature that would lend themselves to being processed with CAT and the staff who would work with CAT tools. The duty stations agreed to hold a full exchange of practices at the eighth coordination meeting of conference managers. **The Committee notes the position taken at the Seventh Coordination Meeting of Conference Managers and encourages further efforts aimed at enhancing the coordinated approach to conference servicing, while emphasizing the need for quality and consistency in all official languages.**

5. As indicated in paragraph 10 of the report, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management launched an information technology global initiative, in line with earlier recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Office of Internal Oversight Services. The Committee notes that outside consultants were engaged to undertake a comprehensive review of both business processes and information technology applications, with a view to streamlining processes and improving standardization and integration across the four duty stations at New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi. As a result of the study, the Department has established an information technology governance board, with the participation of information technology and programme focal points from all four duty stations. The board is designed to ensure consistency, guard against redundancy and duplication of effort and ensure cost-effectiveness in the use of resources. The Committee was informed that one of the key functions of the board is to ensure that all major information technology initiatives are in line with the Secretariat's information technology strategies and policies and that the Information Technology Services Division will have a representative serving on the board in an ex officio capacity. The Committee was also informed that the board would hold its first meeting at the beginning of October 2006. The Committee intends to revert to the matter when it takes up the report of the Secretary-General on information and communication technology.

6. With regard to the utilization of conference-servicing resources, the Committee notes that progress has been made in calendar management by spreading out meeting days and reducing peaks and valleys that prove wasteful. As indicated in paragraph 15 of the Secretary-General's report (see A/61/129), at 85 per cent in 2005, the overall utilization factor was 2 per cent higher than in 2004 and 8 per cent higher as compared to 2003. The Committee observes that the increase in overall utilization was due solely to the improvement of utilization in New York, where there was an increase in the number of meetings programmed and held and a more efficient reassignment of services from cancelled meetings compared with the previous year. Annex I to the report provides a detailed breakdown by body of the utilization statistics and identifies components that have an impact on the utilization factor. In that regard the Committee notes from paragraph 16 of the same report that the time utilized for informal meetings or consultations held before the start, after the adjournment of or instead of the officially scheduled meetings, when utilizing the same services and with due notification given to the Secretariat, is not recorded as time lost. **The Committee is of the view that a precise identification of what constitutes the time lost for conference-servicing is very important for proper**

calculation of the utilization factor; a detailed explanation should be provided of all factors contributing to a loss of time for conference-servicing.

7. The Committee observes that with respect to utilization of the Economic Commission for Africa conference centre at Addis Ababa, a number of events previously booked in 2005 were cancelled, which brought down the utilization rate. The Committee was informed that while the Commission had been using a different methodology in the calculation of utilization rates of its conference facilities, the application of the harmonized statistical standards on meetings used by other conference servicing duty stations for the period from January to June 2006 had brought the utilization rate to 67.9 per cent, as opposed to the 31 per cent calculated on the basis of previous methodology.

8. In response to the General Assembly's request to explore innovative ways of servicing meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States, the Secretary-General has put forward two options in his report. The first option (see A/61/129, para. 30) would lead to greater availability, with no additional budgetary requirements. The services for regional groups would still not be guaranteed since the legislative authority would not change. The second option (see para. 31) would guarantee services for regional group meetings since dedicated resources would be allocated. Although no indication is given at this stage of the magnitude of dedicated resources required, the Secretary-General indicates that the second option would entail significant additional resources.

9. Annex IV to the Secretary-General's report contains statistics on document management. As indicated in paragraph 46 of that report, after years of strict enforcement and the gradual coming on board of the author departments, the timeliness of submissions has improved steadily, although the overall level still shows room for improvement. The Committee notes that some author departments tend to show low compliance with the timely issuance of documents. The Committee was informed that the timely submission of reports had been included as a performance indicator in the Secretary-General's annual compact with the heads of all departments and that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management had recommended that the Secretary-General include the timely submission of mandated documents as a performance indicator of author departments in the biennial programme performance report. **The Committee is of the view that the timely submission of documents should also be included in the proposed programme budget as a performance indicator for author departments.**

10. The Committee recalls its previous recommendation that the document slotting system must have some flexibility built into it, in order to function effectively (see A/60/433, para. 31). The Secretariat reports that the Department introduced flexibility into the slotting system where practical, particularly in discussions with author departments that have been granted a later submission deadline. The Committee was informed that the Department initiated a self-evaluation exercise on the slotting system with the assistance of the Office of Internal Oversight Services and with the participation of author departments.

11. The Committee observes that the capacity of the Organization to print documents using its own facilities was not included in the analysis of the status of document management. The Committee attaches a great deal of importance to this issue as having a significant impact on the ability of the Secretariat to produce

documents in a timely fashion. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the printing capacity would be reviewed. **The Committee requests therefore that analysis of printing capacity of the Organization be included in future reports on conference servicing in general and on document management in particular.**

12. In paragraphs 62 to 67 of his report (A/61/129), the Secretary-General outlines the measures undertaken by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to enhance transparency and accountability as concerns the timely issuance of mandated documents. The Committee welcomes the conclusion stated in paragraph 66 of the report that at this stage, transparency and accountability are firmly in place within the Department and that with the introduction of the accountability mechanism, as recommended by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, there is expected to be greater transparency and accountability throughout the Secretariat.

13. The Committee takes note of the views expressed in paragraphs 68 and 69 of the report that the existing workload standards for specific categories of conference-servicing staff "are a rather crude, one-dimensional measure of performance, focusing on quantity of output alone at the level of individual staff members" and that "there is clearly a need to supplement these standards with more meaningful and multidimensional measures of performance, such as timeliness of delivery and quality of services". **The Committee remains concerned that the Secretary-General has not yet implemented the request of the General Assembly with regard to the development of quantitative methods and indicators to assess productivity, efficiency and cost-effectiveness. The Committee welcomes the intention of the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly on a regular basis, beginning in 2007, an additional array of performance indicators, including timeliness, quality, financial performance and client satisfaction, which would shift the emphasis to broader, higher-level metrics of full-system performance and would allow more timely and targeted action to be taken in response to any weaknesses detected. The Committee trusts that this will represent a concrete step in responding to the General Assembly request contained in section II.B, paragraph 10, of resolution 58/250.**

14. The Committee discussed with the Department the issue of forthcoming retirements and succession planning in the language services. As indicated in paragraph 83 of the report, 20 per cent of all language staff at Headquarters will retire between 2006 and 2011. The Committee was provided upon request with detailed statistics on projected retirements in the Department for the period until December 2011 (see annex I below).

15. The Committee was informed that despite various efforts made to fill vacant language posts in Nairobi, in particular in the Arabic interpretation booth, there were no desired results. The Secretariat provided upon request, detailed information on the vacancy situation in the language services at Headquarters in New York, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) (see annex II below), which shows that the vacancy rate in the Arabic interpretation booth at UNON was 50 per cent as at 31 August 2006. **The Committee reiterates therefore its previous recommendation whereby it encouraged the Department to further intensify efforts to improve the vacancy situation in the conference services of the United Nations Office at Nairobi and, in the light of the prolonged vacancy situation, the Committee urged the Department to consider all possible approaches (see A/60/433, para. 8).**

16. Furthermore, the Committee notes from paragraph 83 of the Secretary-General's report that there has been a decline in the number of applicants for United Nations language examinations in recent years, as the language professions in the United Nations seem to be losing their appeal; fewer universities are offering courses relevant to the work of the United Nations, and fewer students are studying languages in the countries where some of the United Nations official languages are used, portending a shrinking pool of skilled linguists in the near future. **The Committee sees merit in the Secretariat's intention to participate, where appropriate, and in cooperation with other international organizations, in outreach activities targeting universities that train language professionals in order to make them aware of the staffing needs of the international organizations (see A/61/129, para. 86). At the same time the Committee believes that the Organization should try to expedite the timely replacement of retired language staff, expand the recruitment base of linguists and enhance staff training programmes. The Committee is of the view that urgent measures need to be worked out to adequately meet the current and forthcoming challenges of the Organization resulting from a shortage of qualified language specialists.**

Annex I

Projected retirements in conference services, July 2006-December 2011

A. Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, New York

	Jul.-Dec. 2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
Interpreters							
Office of the Chief	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Arabic	0	1	0	0	2	1	4
Chinese	0	1	1	0	1	0	3
English	0	1	0	2	0	0	3
French	0	1	4	1	0	0	6
Russian	0	0	0	2	1	2	5
Spanish	0	0	2	1	0	2	5
Subtotal	**0**	**5**	**7**	**6**	**4**	**5**	**27**
Translators/Revisers							
Arabic	0	1	2	3	1	2	11
Chinese	1	3	2	6	3	0	15
English	0	2	3	1	0	3	9
French	2	3	3	2	1	1	12
Russian	1	0	2	3	2	3	11
Spanish	1	0	0	0	2	1	4
Subtotal	**5**	**11**	**12**	**15**	**9**	**10**	**62**
Verbatim Reporters							
Arabic	0	1	1	0	1	1	4
Chinese	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
English	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
French	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Russian	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Spanish	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	**0**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**8**
Text Processors							
Arabic	6	3	1	1	1	2	14
Chinese	2	2	1	1	1	1	8
English	1	1	0	0	2	3	7
French	0	1	1	1	2	0	5
Russian	2	0	1	0	1	0	4
Spanish	0	4	2	0	2	1	9
Subtotal	**11**	**11**	**6**	**3**	**9**	**7**	**47**

	Jan.–Dec. 2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
Editors							
All	0	2	2	2	3	1	10
Subtotal	**0**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**10**
Total	**16**	**30**	**29**	**27**	**27**	**25**	**154**

B. Conference Services Division, Geneva

	Jan.–Dec. 2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
Interpreters							
Office of the Chief	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Arabic	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Chinese	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
English	0	0	0	2	0	1	3
French	1	1	0	2	0	1	5
Russian	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
Spanish	2	0	0	0	1	1	4
Subtotal	**4**	**4**	**1**	**6**	**2**	**5**	**22**
Translators/Revisers							
Arabic	0	2	2	1	2	1	8
Chinese	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
English	0	0	3	0	1	1	5
French	1	0	3	1	2	2	9
Russian	0	0	1	0	1	1	3
Spanish	0	1	1	3	0	0	5
Subtotal	**1**	**3**	**10**	**5**	**6**	**11**	**36**
Text Processors							
Arabic	1	1	0	2	2	0	6
Chinese	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
English	0	2	0	0	4	2	8
French	1	1	4	0	1	2	9
Russian	0	1	2	2	2	3	10
Spanish	2	1	0	0	1	0	4
Subtotal	**5**	**8**	**6**	**4**	**10**	**7**	**40**
Editors							
All	0	1	1	1	2	1	6
Subtotal	**0**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**6**
Total	**10**	**16**	**18**	**16**	**20**	**24**	**104**

C. Conference Management Service, Vienna

Interpreters							
Office of the Chief	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arabic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
English	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
French	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Russian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spanish	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Subtotal	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Translators/Revisers							
Arabic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
English	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
French	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Russian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spanish	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Text Processors							
Arabic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
English	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
French	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Russian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spanish	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Editors							
All	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	1	0	0	0	0	1

D. Division of Conference Services, Nairobi

	Ads./Dec.	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
Interpreters								
Office of the Chief		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arabic		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chinese		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
English		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
French		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Russian		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spanish		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal		**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Translators/Revisers								
Arabic		0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Chinese		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
English		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
French		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Russian		0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Spanish		0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Subtotal		**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**3**	**3**
Text Processors								
Arabic		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chinese		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
English		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
French		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Russian		0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Spanish		0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Subtotal		**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**2**
Editors								
All								
Subtotal		**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Total		**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**4**	**5**

Annex II

Vacancy situation in conference services as at 31 August 2006

A. Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, New York

Interpretation Service: Professional posts

Section	Established posts	Posts encumbered	Posts vacant	Vacancy rate (%)
Arabic	27	22	5	18.5
Chinese	26	26	0	0.0
English	19	15	4	21.1
French	19	17	2	10.5
Russian	19	17	1	5.6
Spanish	19	18	1	5.3
Total	**129**	**115**	**13**	**10.2**

Translation Services: Professional posts

Section	Established posts	Posts encumbered	Posts vacant	Vacancy rate (%)
Arabic	59	47	12	20.3
Chinese	59	56	3	5.1
English	23	20	3	13.0
French	57	44	13	22.8
Russian	54	44	10	18.5
Spanish	54	45	9	16.7
Total	**306**	**256**	**50**	**16.3**

Text Processing Section: General Service posts

Section	Established posts	Posts encumbered	Posts vacant	Vacancy rate (%)
Arabic	35	31	4	11.4
Chinese	34	33	1	2.9
English	32	32	0	0.0
French	34	34	0	0.0
Russian	35	34	1	2.9
Spanish	35	33	2	5.7
Total	**205**	**197**	**8**	**3.9**

B. Conference Management Services Division, Geneva

Interpretation Service: Professional posts

Section	*Ideal post scenario*	*Posts encumbered*	*Posts vacant*	*Vacancy rate (%)*
Arabic	14	12	2	14.3
Chinese	14	14	0	0.0
English	16	15	1	6.3
French	16	15	1	6.3
Russian	13	13	0	0.0
Spanish	10	9	1	10.0
Total	**83**	**78**	**5**	**6.0**

Translation Services: Professional posts

Section	*Established posts*	*Posts encumbered*	*Posts vacant*	*Vacancy rate (%)*
Arabic	23	21	2	8.7
Chinese	20	18	4	20.0
English	15	11	4	26.7
French	35	34	1	2.9
Russian	35	33	2	5.7
Spanish	25	24	1	4.0
Total	**153**	**141**	**14**	**9.2**

Text Processing Section: General Service posts

Section	*Established posts*	*Posts encumbered*	*Posts vacant*	*Vacancy rate (%)*
Arabic	15	15	0	0.0
Chinese	13	12	1	7.7
English	21	21	0	0.0
French	26	24	2	7.7
Russian	27	27	0	0.0
Spanish	20	17	3	15.0
Total	**122**	**116**	**6**	**4.9**

C. Conference Management Service, Vienna

Interpretation Section: Professional posts

Section	*Ideal post scenario*	*Posts encumbered*	*Posts vacant*	*Vacancy rate (%)*
Arabic	4	3	1	25.0
Chinese	4	4	0	0.0
English	3	2	1	33.3
French	3	3	0	0.0
Russian	3	2	1	33.3
Spanish	3	2	1	33.3
Total	**20**	**16**	**4**	**20.0**

Translation Section: Professional posts

Service	*Established posts*	*Posts encumbered*	*Posts vacant*	*Vacancy rate (%)*
Arabic	6	5	1	16.7
Chinese	6	5	1	16.7
English	3	1	2	66.7
French	9	7	2	22.2
Russian	6	5	1	16.7
Spanish	8	8	0	0.0
Total	**38**	**31**	**7**	**18.4**

Text Processing Section: General Service posts

Section	*Established posts*	*Posts encumbered*	*Posts vacant*	*Vacancy rate (%)*
Arabic	4	4	0	0.0
Chinese	3	3	0	0.0
English	4	4	0	0.0
French	7	7	0	0.0
Russian	5	5	0	0.0
Spanish	7	7	0	0.0
Total	**30**	**30**	**0**	0.0

[*] The post of the Section Chief has not been included in the table but was encumbered.

D. Division of Conference Services, Nairobi

Interpretation units: Professional posts

Unit	*Ideal post scenario*	*Posts encumbered*	*Posts vacant*	*Vacancy rate (%)*
Arabic	4	2	2	50.0
Chinese	4	3	1	25.0
English	3	3	0	0.0
French	3	2	1	33.3
Russian	3	2	1	33.3
Spanish	3	2	1	33.3
Total	**20**	**14**	**6**	**30.0**

Translation and Editorial Section: Professional posts

Unit	*Established posts*	*Posts encumbered*	*Posts vacant*	*Vacancy rate (%)*
Arabic	3	1	2	66.7
Chinese	3	3	0	0.0
English	5	4	1	20.0
French	4	4	0	0.0
Russian	3	2	1	33.3
Spanish	4	3	1	25.0
Total	**22**	**17**	**5**	**22.7**

Text Processing Section: General Service posts

Section	*Established posts*	*Posts encumbered*	*Posts vacant*	*Vacancy rate (%)*
Arabic	4	4	0	0.0
Chinese	4	4	0	0.0
English	3	3	0	0.0
French	5	5	0	0.0
Russian	3	3	0	0.0
Spanish	3	3	0	0.0
Total	**22**	**22**	**0**	**0.0**

United Nations A/61/500

General Assembly

Distr.: General
9 October 2006

Original: English

Sixty-first session
Agenda item 32
Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Note by the Secretary-General*

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the thirty-eighth report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/104.

* The present report is submitted late so as to include as much updated information as possible.

06-56107 (E) 261006

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Summary

The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories is composed of three Member States: Sri Lanka (Chair), Malaysia and Senegal.

Although the Special Committee had to postpone its field visit, scheduled for August 2006, to the month of November 2006, the present, thirty-eighth report to the General Assembly reflects the substance of information made available to the Committee by Palestinian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations agencies active in the occupied territories and international NGOs. The present submission will be followed by an updated report to be submitted to the General Assembly in the early months of 2007, upon completion of the rescheduled field visit of the Special Committee to the Middle East.

Section V of the report provides information on the human rights situation in the occupied territories and section VI reviews Israeli practices affecting the human rights of Syrian Arab citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan. Section VII presents the conclusions and recommendations of the Special Committee to the General Assembly.

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I. Introduction

1. Established in 1968 by General Assembly resolution 2443 (XXIII), the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories is composed of three Member States.

2. These Member States are Sri Lanka (represented by the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, H.E. Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam, serving as Chairperson), Senegal (represented by the Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations Office at Geneva, H.E. Ambassador Ousmane Camara), and Malaysia (represented by the Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations, H.E. Ambassador Hamidon Ali who, on 10 May 2006, replaced H.E. Ambassador Mohd Radzi Abdul Rahman).

3. The Special Committee reports to the Secretary-General. Its reports are reviewed in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) of the General Assembly.

II. Mandate

4. The mandate of the Special Committee, as set out in resolution 2443 (XXIII) and subsequent resolutions, is to investigate Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the population of the occupied territories. For the purposes of the present report, the occupied territories are those remaining under Israeli occupation, namely the occupied Syrian Golan, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. The persons covered by resolution 2443 (XXIII) and therefore the subject of the investigation of the Special Committee are the civilian population residing in the areas occupied as a result of the hostilities of June 1967 and those persons normally resident in the areas that are under occupation but who left those areas because of the hostilities.

5. The human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs in the occupied territories are referred to by the Security Council in its resolution 237 (1967) as "essential and inalienable human rights" and also find their legal basis in the protection afforded by international law, in particular in such circumstances as military occupation and, in the case of prisoners of war, capture. By resolution 3005 (XXVII), the General Assembly requested the Special Committee to investigate as well allegations concerning the exploitation and the looting of the resources of the occupied territories, the pillaging of its archaeological and cultural heritage and interferences in the freedom of worship in its holy places.

6. The "policies" and "practices" affecting human rights that come within the scope of investigation by the Special Committee refer, in the case of "policies", to any course of action consciously adopted and pursued by the Government of Israel as part of its declared or undeclared intent; while "practices" refer to those actions which, irrespective of whether or not they were in implementation of a policy, reflect a pattern of behaviour on the part of the Israeli authorities towards the civilian population in the occupied areas.

7. The Special Committee bases its work on human rights standards and obligations as defined in particular by the Charter of the United Nations, the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War and the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, the Hague Convention of 14 May 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, and the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land. The Special Committee also relies on those resolutions relevant to the situation of civilians in the occupied territories adopted by the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the former Commission on Human Rights and the newly established Human Rights Council.

8. As in previous years, the General Assembly, in its resolution 60/104 requested "the Special Committee, pending complete termination of the Israeli occupation, to continue to investigate Israeli policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, especially Israeli violations of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, and to consult, as appropriate, with the International Committee of the Red Cross according to its regulations in order to ensure that the welfare and human rights of the peoples of the occupied territories are safeguarded and to report to the Secretary-General as soon as possible and whenever the need arises thereafter". The Assembly also requested the Special Committee "to continue to investigate the treatment of prisoners and detainees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967".

III. Activities of the Special Committee

A. Meetings held by the Special Committee

9. The Chairman of the Special Committee introduced his report before the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly in New York during the debate on the question of Palestine, which took place from 7 to 10 November 2005. On 7 November, the members of the Special Committee held a working session in order to review and plan their activities in 2006. They also had a working session with the Permanent Observer for Palestine on 9 November.

10. On 29 November 2005, the Chairman of the Special Committee was invited to participate in the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People which took place simultaneously in New York and Geneva. He attended the ceremony in Geneva while Ambassador Rahman took part in the commemoration in New York. A common message was delivered in both places.

11. During its consultations in Geneva from 16 to 21 March 2006, the Special Committee exchanged views with the Permanent Representatives of Egypt and the Syrian Arabic Republic, as well as the Permanent Observers for Palestine, the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. An invitation to the Permanent Representative of Israel to meet with the Committee did not receive a reply. Consultations were also held with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and a number of representatives of United Nations agencies such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children's

Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Finally the Special Committee discussed the situation of human rights in the occupied territories with a representative of Human Rights Watch. It also reviewed its work and made plans for its visit to the Middle East.

B. Field visit of the Special Committee to the Middle East

12. Thirty-eight years after its inception, the Special Committee has still not been authorized by Israel to visit the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). The Committee sent a letter on 13 June 2006 to the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations Office at Geneva, which was copied to the Secretary-General on 14 June 2006, requesting full access to this territory and emphasizing that "only in such conditions would the Committee benefit from a valuable opportunity to exchange direct views with concerned Israeli authorities on the situation of human rights in the OPT and to report accordingly to the General Assembly". Permission was nevertheless again denied.

13. On 13 July 2006, the Secretary-General sent a reply to the Chairman of the Special Committee stating that he shared the Committee's concern over the human rights situation in the Middle East and the continued construction of the Barrier. He added: "With regard to your request that I intervene and use my good offices to express concern to the Government of Israel about the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and urge it to improve its cooperation with the Special Committee, I wish to inform you that a message to that effect has been conveyed to the Israeli Permanent Mission in New York".

14. The field visit of the Special Committee to the Middle East was initially scheduled to take place from 1 to 15 June 2006. Owing to limitations affecting the resources allocated from the regular budget to the Special Committee, the visit was rescheduled for 1 to 15 August 2006. However, the seriously deteriorating security situation in the region, which entailed restrictions of movement and travel both for the Committee and Palestinian witnesses, compelled the Special Committee reluctantly to postpone its field visit. The Special Committee's decision to postpone its visit was also based on advice received from the United Nations Department of Safety and Security which issued instructions suspending United Nations missions to the Syrian Arab Republic and restricting missions to Jordan to those considered essential for humanitarian purposes.

15. The Special Committee instead held consultations in Geneva from 31 July to 2 August 2006 with a view to reviewing the situation and revising plans for a field visit to Egypt, Jordan and Syria by mid-November 2006. It exchanged views on the latest developments in the region and the postponement of its visit with the Permanent Representatives of the concerned countries, who regretted the postponement as the Special Committee's visit, in their view, was all the more necessary at this critical juncture for the Palestinian people. The Special Committee met with the Permanent Observers for Palestine, the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. It conducted consultations with representatives of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Office for the

Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). It also met with a representative of an international non-governmental organization (NGO).

16. Although the Special Committee was not in a position to undertake its field visit as scheduled, it wishes to express its deep appreciation to the Offices of the United Nations Resident Coordinators for Egypt, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic for their preparations for the visit.

C. Context of the report

17. For the thirty-eighth consecutive year, the Special Committee submits a report to the General Assembly. The present report is submitted in accordance with Assembly resolution 60/104.

18. Owing to the postponement of the field visit, the report this year is based essentially on documents, surveys and case studies made available by Palestinian and Israeli NGOs through a variety of means, as well as on articles, studies and other material from United Nations agencies active in OPT and from international NGOs.[1] The present report will be followed by an updated report which will be submitted to the General Assembly in the early months of 2007, upon completion of the rescheduled field visit.

IV. Latest developments

19. This year the Special Committee was again denied access by the Government of Israel to the occupied territories. Although the prevailing security situation prevented it from visiting the region at all, the Special Committee received ample evidence from a wide range of sources attesting to the seriously deteriorating human rights situation in OPT. The Special Committee is of the view that the impunity with which the State of Israel operates in OPT must be brought to an end by all available means. Events like the Lebanese crisis overshadowed and have further aggravated the human rights situation in OPT, which goes unnoticed by world opinion while harsh daily attacks against fundamental civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights of Palestinians continue unabated.

A. In the occupied Palestinian territories

20. Events during the period under review had raised many hopes among Palestinians and the international community: the withdrawal of Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and the evacuation of Jewish settlements from the Gaza Strip and from a few settlements in the northern West Bank between 15 August and 12 September 2005, accompanied by a significantly decreasing level of violence before and after the withdrawal. However, these hopes faded quickly when it became evident in the following months that Israel remained in effective control of the airspace as well as the maritime and land borders of the Gaza Strip, and that chances of economic recovery were seriously impeded by recurrent closures of important checkpoints like Erez for those Palestinians working in Israel or Karni for imports or exports of goods and manufactured products.

21. The Palestinian legislative elections were the result of a democratic process. However, the absence of a clear commitment by Hamas to the Quartet conditions (adherence to the principle of non-violence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the road map) led to a situation whereby the new Hamas-led Palestinian Government, established on 29 March 2006 under the Presidency of Mahmoud Abbas, was increasingly boycotted by the Government of Israel, ignored by the international community and paralysed. Major donors, including the European Union, the United States of America, Canada and Japan, suspended their financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority (PA), while Israel stopped transferring to the Authority customs taxes and revenues collected on its behalf. In addition, Israeli banks no longer had any contacts with Palestinian banks and Arab banks were prevented from transferring funds because of fears they would be sued by clients for transferring funds to organizations on the "terrorist" list of the United States and the European Union.

22. The emergence of the Kadima party, created by former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, during the Knesset elections of 28 March 2006 raised some expectations regarding the formation of a coalition with the Labour Party and other partners that might allow for a redefinition of Israeli positions regarding the future borders of the State of Israel and any future Palestinian State. In early April 2006, the Council of the European Union "underlined the importance of a strong commitment by the new Israeli Government to work towards a negotiated solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on existing agreements, the relevant United Nations Security Resolutions and the principles laid in the Road Map". The Council further "called on Israel to desist from any action, such as settlement activities and the construction of the Separation Barrier on Palestinian land, that is contrary to international law and threatens the viability of an agreed two-state solution".[2] However, the Israeli coalition Government, formed under the leadership of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, announced a programme aimed at continuing unilateral withdrawals from some West Bank settlements, outside the road map process, and with an attempt at defining its international borders within four years.

23. The suspension of funding by major donors and the non-payment by Israel of taxes and revenues due to the Palestinian Authority triggered a major crisis in OPT, as it is estimated that salaries paid to Palestinian civil servants (two out of five working persons in Gaza and one in five in the West Bank are employed by PA) provide the living of some 900,000 persons throughout the Territory. As of the end of August 2006, most of the salaries had not been paid for about five months and the level of poverty sharply increased, including among senior civil servants who could no longer pay for their transportation to work. PA is the main provider of health and social services in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and it no longer had the resources to sustain its network of hospitals, clinics and health centres. Women, children, the handicapped and the elderly were among the first vulnerable groups to be affected by this drastic shrinking of resources.

24. The human rights situation in OPT has deteriorated since the Palestinian legislative elections owing to unprecedented levels of violence. Daily launching of Qassam rockets into Israel by Palestinian militants in Gaza since the end of March 2006 and the suicide attack in Tel Aviv on 17 April provoked intensive artillery shelling of the northern and eastern Gaza Strip and intensified targeted killings. In the West Bank, freedom of movement for Palestinians was further impeded by the accelerated construction of the wall and the building of separate road systems for

Israelis and Palestinians, further aggravating the encirclement and isolation of ever-shrinking Palestinian lands. Since Israeli military orders were issued in January 2006, only one third of the existing routes and crossing points in the wall have been open to about 60,000 West Bank Palestinians who commute regularly to East Jerusalem. Moreover, additional permanent or flying checkpoints, roadblocks and physical barriers have been installed. From January to April 2006 alone, the number of these obstacles increased from 471 to 550.

B. At the international level

25. The deteriorating overall situation in OPT during the first part of 2006 was widely reflected in the international media. Fears of an imminent and predictable humanitarian disaster were voiced by numerous stakeholders, including many United Nations agencies and international and local NGOs. The High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a statement on 12 May 2006 warning that the region was on the brink of a human rights and humanitarian crisis and reminding the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority of their international humanitarian law and human rights obligations so that the Israeli and Palestinian peoples might live in an environment where their protection from attack and enjoyment of their fundamental civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights could be assured.

26. Following its first session, held in June 2006,[1] the newly established Human Rights Council convened its first special session on 5 July 2006 to discuss the disastrous situation in the Palestinian and other occupied Arab territories. In resolution S-7/7, the Council decided to dispatch an urgent fact-finding mission to OPT headed by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. It also demanded that Israel, the occupying Power, end its military operations in OPT and urged it immediately to release the arrested Palestinian ministers, members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and other officials. The Council urged all concerned parties to respect the rules of international humanitarian law, to refrain from violence against the civilian population and to treat under all circumstances all detained combatants and civilians in accordance with the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949. The Israeli Government did not respond to the various requests made to follow up on the Council resolution and the fact-finding mission has not yet taken place.

27. On 9 May 2006, representatives of the Quartet met in New York to discuss the current situation in Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. They expressed their serious concern about the deteriorating conditions, particularly in Gaza, and expressed their willingness to endorse a temporary international mechanism (TIM), limited in scope and duration, aimed at ensuring direct delivery of assistance to the Palestinian people. As of the time of writing, the mechanism has started under the umbrella of the European Union.

28. Moreover, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and the Special Rapporteur on the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health issued separate public statements on 12 and 19 July 2006 reminding the Government of Israel of its international humanitarian and human rights law obligations in the sphere of work covered by their respective mandates. On 21 July 2006, the Representative of the Secretary-General on the

human rights of internally displaced persons, the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and the Special Rapporteur on the right to education issued a joint press release calling on the parties to fully respect the principle of proportionality in the conduct of hostilities and to refrain from indiscriminate attacks on civilians causing loss of life and mass displacement. They recalled that the civilian population must be protected in all circumstances and that parties to a conflict must comply with the international legal obligation to distinguish between civilian and military objectives. International human rights law and humanitarian law both recognize the need to ensure the rights of civilians to life, food, the highest attainable standard of health, housing and other fundamental human rights, which remain applicable in times of armed conflict.

29. At its substantive session of 2006, the Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan. The Council, calling on both parties to fulfil their obligations under the road map in cooperation with the Quartet, called "for the lifting of the severe restrictions imposed on the Palestinian people, including those arising from the current Israeli military operations, and for other urgent measures to be taken to alleviate the desperate humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories". It also stressed the need "to preserve the national unity and the territorial integrity of the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and to guarantee the freedom of movement of persons and goods in the Territory ... and the freedom of movement to and from the outside world". The Council called on Israel "to restore and replace the destroyed civilian infrastructure, including the only power station, where Israeli air strikes on Gaza's power plant have had a far-reaching impact on Gaza's hospitals, food production facilities, water and sanitation systems". It also reaffirmed the inalienable right of the Palestinian people and the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan to all their natural and economic resources, the illegality of Israeli settlements in OPT, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan, and stressed that the wall was contrary to international law and debilitating to the economic and social development of the Palestinian people.

V. Human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territories

30. This section describes the extent to which the human rights of Palestinians and other Arabs in OPT have been affected or violated by Israeli policies and practices during the year under review. The pattern already noted in previous reports has continued. The unabated expansion of the wall, cutting off many Palestinian communities from access to their fields and business, schools and universities, to Jerusalem and other cities in the northern West Bank, and to much-needed health and social services; the diversion of water sources away from Palestinians; and the restrictions impeding the freedom of movement of Palestinians by means of road closures, checkpoints and bypass roads built for the sole use of Jewish settlers all

constitute human rights violations. The accumulation of problems is further exacerbated by the current unprecedented humanitarian crisis, the excessive use of force by parties to the conflict, the continuing lack of rule of law and order in OPT and the unwillingness or inability of Israeli and Palestinian leaders to resume negotiations. In addition, the international community has been very reluctant to make sensible proposals agreeable to both parties.

A. Right of self-determination

31. According to one source of information, the policy of the Government of Israel aimed at creating a segregation zone in the West Bank, cutting through the western part of the West Bank and running from north to south, taking the most fertile agricultural lands, isolating Palestinian communities in enclaves, undermining the territorial contiguity of the Palestinian villages and cities, and confiscating natural resources continued unabated. Some 230 military orders were issued by IDF to seize Palestinian land in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to build the separation wall. More than two thirds of these orders related to Jerusalem (49), Bethlehem (44), Ramallah (36), Hebron and Jenin (18 each), and to Qalqiliya (15). Moreover, Israel has opened another segregation zone in the eastern part of the West Bank, without walls or fences, but incorporating points of access along the Jordan Valley and the shores of the Dead Sea and covering an area of 1,664 km^2, i.e. 29.4 per cent of the West Bank. The zone included 43 Israeli settlements and isolated 42 Palestinian localities.

32. The same source of information indicated that by the end of 2005, Israeli forces had completed the construction of 243 km of the 702-km wall in the West Bank. In February 2005, another segment of the wall, 122 km long, was begun and was due to be completed by the end of 2006. So far, only 118 km of the wall follow the Green Line. The construction of an additional portion of 337 km was supposed to begin towards the end of 2006. At present, 99 Israeli settlements and 55 Palestinian localities are directly affected by the construction of the wall.

33. According to a 2006 report on the situation of workers in the occupied territories of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the wall's route was likely to take in about 170,123 West Bank settlers and over 180,000 people in East Jerusalem. About 50,000 Palestinians were allegedly located in 38 villages and towns within the "seam zone" between the wall and the Green Line, and more than 500,000 Palestinians were reportedly living within 1 km of the wall, separated from their families, lands or jobs located on the other side. Since March 2005, more than 220,000 Palestinians have been deprived of water for their domestic and agricultural needs, as some 50 groundwater wells, over 200 cisterns in the West Bank and 35,000 km of water pipes have been destroyed or isolated from their owners by the wall. Only 17 per cent of water resources in the West Bank aquifers was available to Palestinians, while Israelis were using 73 per cent of these resources and Jewish settlers in the West Bank the remaining 10 per cent. Palestinians only had access to their land within the "seam zone" through specific crossing points in the wall, at certain times during the day, and with a valid permit. Between January and July 2005, the proportion of holders of valid permits denied access to the other side of the wall rose from 25 per cent to 38 per cent.[4]

34. One source of information stated that in the region of Qalqiliya, the wall around Zufin had four gates that could be used by farmers from Falamya, Jayyus, 'Azzun and al-Nabi Elyas. Initially, three gates were generally opened three times a day, for about 1 1/2 hours, except during general closures and Israeli holidays; one of the gates on only one occasion since June 2005 remained open, exceptionally, for 12 consecutive hours. The need to plan work around the times that the gates were open added to the burden of farmers, especially during the olive harvest. In order to reach their fields in the south-eastern part of Zufin, the residents of 'Azzun and al-Nabi Elyas had to travel 7 km to the west in order to go through the gate, and then back east to reach their fields. There was no driveable road, and residents with valid permits were forced to walk several hours or use donkeys. This considerable loss of time severely hampered the capacity of 15 families in both villages to maintain their former level of production. Their income significantly dropped once they stopped working their fields.[5]

35. Another source of information highlighted the detrimental effects of the wall surrounding Jerusalem and cutting through a dense urban area. Once completed, this portion of the wall would cut off 220,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. Another 100,000 Palestinians living in the suburbs around Jerusalem would also be separated from the city. Many of them were legal residents who left the city following Israeli restrictions imposed on the development of Palestinian neighbourhoods. Palestinians with Jerusalem identity cards are now forced to travel lengthy routes and suffer extensive delays at checkpoints to enter the city. Since January 2006, the situation has become even worse, according to one United Nations agency, as 8 out of the 12 roads allowing access to Jerusalem from the West Bank have been closed to Palestinians. People without valid permits to cross the wall at specific gates were denied access to jobs, schools, hospitals and other essential facilities available in Jerusalem.

36. A source of information indicated that as of September 2005, Israel started building five main crossing points, or "terminals", in Tarqumia (Hebron), Al-Jalameh (Jenin), Mazmuria (Bethlehem), Sha'ar Ephraim (Tulkarem) and Betunia, in Ramallah; 10 other terminals were believed already to be operational in neighbouring areas, tightly controlling the movement of Palestinians in the West Bank. The same source said that during the period under review, satellite images had shown 13,412 new housing units being constructed in the West Bank for Jewish settlers, including in Bethlehem (3,950 units), Salfit (3,561 units), Jerusalem (3,481 units), Qalqiliya (1,670 units) and Ramallah (750 units); 92 per cent of these new housing units had been or were being erected in settlements west of the wall, and 63 per cent of them in what is known as the Greater Jerusalem area.

37. According to an analysis carried out by OCHA, the closure system was a primary cause of poverty, and the humanitarian crisis in the West Bank and Gaza Strip severely hampered access by Palestinians to health and education services, employment, markets, and social and religious networks. Obstacles included permanent and partially manned checkpoints, roadblocks (consisting of rows of 1 m-long concrete blocks), metal gates, earth mounds, earth walls (long series of earth mounds), trenches, road barriers and permit restrictions. Since January 2006, 471 physical obstacles have been placed by IDF on roads to control and restrict Palestinian vehicular traffic, 95 more than in August 2005; the number had increased to 550 by July 2006. The increase of physical obstacles was more noticeable in Hebron governorate, northern West Bank, and around the governorates

of Nablus, Salfit and Tulkarem. By contrast, the number of physical obstacles remained stable in the central region which is, however, increasingly affected by the wall, especially around Ramallah governorate and East Jerusalem. Some of the obstacles that had been placed immediately prior to the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip remained. Prior to disengagement, north-south traffic could bypass Nablus, but during the withdrawal, that section of the road was closed and has remained closed since then.

38. Other measures implemented by IDF, such as flying or random checkpoints, increased from 60 to 70 per week in August 2005 to more than 100 per week in December 2005. The wall and related restrictive measures around East Jerusalem undermined the city's role as a centre for commerce, education, health and other services. Travel between the northern and southern parts of the West Bank involved a time-consuming and costly detour around East Jerusalem. In the south of Hebron, rural livelihoods based on raising sheep and goats and the sale of meat and dairy products in Yatta and the Old Suq of Hebron were destroyed as farmers no longer had access to their markets.[6]

39. One source of information highlighted the negative effects on large segments of the Palestinian population of checkpoints, which were perceived as persistent forms of collective punishment. Students, teachers, medical patients and staff and ordinary working people were subjected to many forms of ill-treatment by Israeli soldiers, including beatings, stripping and being made to sit in the mud or to stand for hours in the sun or the cold before being allowed to cross checkpoints. Many cases of medical staff or patients not being allowed to cross checkpoints to reach medical facilities were reported. On several occasions, patients were transported in wheelchairs or on the backs of donkeys as ambulances were not allowed to pass checkpoints. A number of patients consequently died.

40. The unilateral withdrawal by Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip was followed by the Agreement on Movement and Access, concluded on 15 November 2005 between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority "to promote peaceful economic development and improve the humanitarian situation on the ground", aimed at establishing an international crossing at Rafah, on the Egyptian border, increasing Palestinian exports through Karni to 150 truckloads per day and facilitating movement within and between the West Bank and Gaza. However, no progress has been made on reopening Gaza Airport, re-establishing the bus connection between Gaza and the West Bank and lifting the restriction on fishing to within the 10 nautical mile limit. Although joint Palestinian-Egyptian control over the Rafah crossing had been established, with a contingent of EU observers stationed at the border, the crossing has been subjected to recurrent closures in the last few months. The main crossing points to Israel at Erez (passengers) and Karni (goods) were affected by long periods of closure and other restrictions. On the economic side, Palestinians were often unable to meet delivery deadlines and perishable agricultural products were going to waste as a result of the erratic opening and closing times of the Karni crossing.[7]

B. Right to freedom of movement and freedom to choose one's residence

41. According to information received, the Israeli High Court of Justice on 14 May 2006 rejected the petitions filed by two NGOs, Adalah and the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, opposing the amendment to the Nationality Law enacted in July 2005 by the Knesset. The *Nationality and Entry into Israel Law* (2003), originally enacted for one year, was extended in July 2004, January 2005, and again in July 2005 with amendments. As amended, the Law denies any possibility of citizenship or formal residency status in Israel to Palestinians from the OPT married to Israeli citizens or residents. Exceptions to the amended law only allow temporary permits in Israel for female spouses over 25 and male spouses of over 35 years old; however, a provision of the law provides that no permit to stay in Israel shall be granted to an OPT resident whose family member might constitute a security threat to Israel. The law, which does not apply to Jewish Israelis who marry foreigners, severely infringes the right to family life of Arab Israeli citizens who are married to OPT residents, many of whom are compelled to live apart from their spouses. Couples who decide to live together in Israel or East Jerusalem in violation of the law are unable to have a normal life, and live in constant fear. If they decide to live in OPT, the spouse holding an Israeli identity card violates the military order prohibiting Israelis from entering areas under Palestinian security control.

42. On 30 June 2006, Israeli authorities revoked the Jerusalem residency rights of four Hamas members of the Palestinian Legislative Council as well as of a Cabinet minister, a measure that had been approved by the Israeli Prime Minister in April 2006.

C. Right to life

43. Various reports received by the Special Committee acknowledge the serious deterioration of the human rights situation in OPT since the beginning of 2006. The resumption of daily launching of Qassam rockets towards Israel by Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip in March-April and the suicide attack in a Tel Aviv café on 17 April 2006, killing nine civilians and the bomber, triggered intensive artillery shelling of the northern and eastern areas of the Gaza Strip and increased targeted killings. This state of violence reached unprecedented levels at the end of June when the Gaza Strip was subjected to wide-scale IDF military operations in the aftermath of paramilitary operations conducted on 25 June by three Palestinian militant groups, the Izzedine al-Qassam brigade, the military wing of the ruling Hamas party, the Popular Resistance Committees and the Army of Islam, against an IDF outpost in the Karm Abu Salem area, south-east of Rafah. Two IDF soldiers were killed, six others injured and one Israeli soldier, Corporal Gilad Shalit, was captured. Two Palestinians were killed during the operation.

44. Following the kidnapping of the Israeli soldier, major military operations called "Summer Rain" were launched by Israeli forces leading to the complete naval, air and land blockade of the Gaza Strip, isolating it totally from the outside world and preventing the supply to the population of much-needed international humanitarian assistance. These military incursions led to the reoccupation of several parts of the Gaza Strip by IDF, which used missile and artillery fire, targeting most of the time civilians, including many women and children. It is estimated that during

the period from 25 June to 31 July 2006, IDF operations took the lives of at least 156 Palestinians, including 81 civilians, 33 children and 9 women. Some 720 Palestinians were reportedly injured, including 168 children.

45. Reports forwarded to the Special Committee indicated that in several cases missiles were fired by IDF targeting leaders of Palestinian armed groups, medical personnel or civilians in their cars or in their homes, during the day or late at night. A doctor, his wife and seven children were killed on 12 July 2006 by two rockets fired into his two-storey house located in the densely populated neighbourhood of Sheikh Radwan, in the Gaza City. Four neighbours were injured and 10 houses damaged during this attack. The media widely reported the tragic shelling which took the lives of a seven-member family on Beit Lahia beach in Gaza on 9 June 2006 in which 31 other civilians were wounded, including 14 children. A long list of similar incidents were also reported to the Special Committee. With the exception of one case, none of these incidents was reported as being investigated by Israeli authorities.

46. It was reported to the Special Committee that of about 70 cases of disabled people in the Gaza Strip, seven were killed by rocket fire, were shot to death or died from injuries. Seventeen other persons required amputations following air or tank shelling including one person who lost all his limbs. Seventeen disabled persons had their homes demolished by shelling or bombs.

47. Several sources of information emphasized the highly sophisticated weapons used by IDF in their recent attacks on the Gaza Strip. These included F-16 fighter jets, Apache helicopter gunships, Mercava tanks and heavy artillery units, all known for their precision. During the period under review, fighter jets repeatedly broke the sound barrier over Gaza, as often as 25 times a day. Many civilians, and especially children, suffered from severe trauma from the frequent shellings and sonic booms. Another source of information indicated that since the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in August/September 2005, more than 7,700 shells had been fired into northern Gaza, and numerous unexploded devices remained in heavily populated areas.

D. Right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, clothing and housing

48. According to one source of information, extensive damage was caused during IDF incursions, leading to the destruction of large portions of the Gaza international airport and the razing of wide areas of agricultural cropland in the vicinity of the airport on 28 June 2006. Residential areas of El-Shoka were heavily shelled, forcing about 150 families to take temporary refuge in UNRWA premises in Rafah. Combined military operations were conducted to the east of Rafah: from 3 to 18 July, IDF carried out several successive incursions into Beit Hanoun, in the north of the Gaza Strip, and occupied large parts of the town, destroying the fences of four UNRWA schools and damaging four secondary schools. A health clinic was also damaged as was the cemetery of the town and a mosque. On 27 July, IDF planes shelled Al-Azhar University College of Agriculture and the nearby Agricultural Secondary School in Beit Hanoun. IDF reportedly destroyed or damaged about 120 houses in the districts of northern Gaza and in Rafah, and razed at least 265 dunums of agricultural cropland. IDF led several incursions into Khan Younis, as of 12 July,

allegedly using tens of armoured vehicles firing indiscriminately at houses and damaging about 100 of them. One hundred dunums of agricultural cropland were razed and water wells and irrigation channels destroyed.

49. Between 27 June and 15 July 2006, three bridges were bombarded by IDF, two in the Gaza Valley and a third connecting the centre of Gaza to El-Moghraqa, which was completely destroyed. Reports indicated that Palestinian technical crews had not yet been authorized by IDF to repair the bridges, especially those in the Gaza Valley, which were essential to communications between the north and south of the Gaza Strip. So far, only limited repair of roads under the bridges has been undertaken to allow the passage of vehicles; this might take even longer during the winter when the water level in the Gaza Valley rises. In addition, the only power plant functioning in Gaza, which provides 45 per cent of the electricity consumed (the other 55 per cent being supplied by the Israeli Electricity Company), was bombed and out of action. That severely hampered the functioning health facilities, water wells, sewage disposal facilities and access to water in buildings of Gaza City.

50. The Gaza Strip was therefore more and more dependent on supply of fuel to operate back-up generators powering water supplies, pump stations and wastewater treatment plants. Recently, Israeli authorities only authorized sporadic use of the Nahal Oz energy pipeline, the only fuel line of supply. Every day, 18,000 litres of fuel were needed to keep generators operational; maintenance of equipment and replacement of spare parts were becoming problematic. The pipe network for water and sewage was damaged or destroyed in various places of the Gaza Strip. Several containers with equipment, spare parts and other material were kept waiting at the Karni crossing for more than three months. At least 33 sewage pump stations, 120 water wells and 120 roof water tanks throughout the Gaza Strip were affected by the irregular supply of electricity resulting from overdependency on generators. There was a real risk of floods in the lagoons of low-lying areas of the Gaza Strip where wastewater had reached a critical level due to the lack of pumping facilities.

51. If access to water was described as becoming more and more critical in the Gaza Strip following recent Israeli attacks, the West Bank was also direly affected by similar problems, a source indicated. Five Palestinian communities in Jenin governorate, in the northern part of the West Bank, with a population of about 15,200 persons, has been totally deprived of water supply since the end of June 2006, as the West Bank Water Department was no longer able to make diesel fuel available to operate a groundwater well, due to shortage of funds from the Palestinian Ministry of Finance. It was expected that other Palestinian communities would very soon suffer a similar fate.

52. Various sources of information reported that a new pattern was being used by IDF when demolishing the houses of Palestinian civilians. Warnings were given by telephone to the inhabitants of the houses, informing them of the imminent shelling or destruction of their homes and giving them barely an hour to evacuate their houses. Most of the time, people had no time to take personal belongings or furniture with them. In a number of cases, however, fake calls were recorded and no shelling occurred.

53. Between 29 June and 16 July 2006, IDF conducted several air raids on buildings accommodating institutions of the Palestinian Authority in various parts of Gaza City, in particular, offices of the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Commerce, as well as an office of the

Palestinian Legislative Council in the northern area of the Gaza Strip. All buildings were destroyed, including houses and vehicles parked in the neighbourhood.

54. Two sources indicated that during the period under review, about 175 to 250 houses were reportedly demolished in the West Bank, roughly one third of them in East Jerusalem and two thirds in other parts of the West Bank. These demolitions were generally taking place in areas close to Israeli settlements and within the boundaries of East Jerusalem, most of the time under the pretext of security or because the owners of the houses were unable to comply with the intricacies of the building permit system. Around 100 houses in the Bustan neighbourhood of Silwan district, south of old Jerusalem City, were affected by such demolitions, which were perceived as measures of collective punishment.

55. As indicated by several sources, living conditions of Palestinians in OPT continued to deteriorate due to the suspension of international aid, which had amounted to around US$ 9 billion in the last few years. The situation was further aggravated by the inability of the Palestinian Authority to pay the salaries of civil servants in both civilian and security sectors out of a monthly budget estimated at US$ 165 million.

56. Should the situation persist, poverty was expected to increase to 74 per cent by 2008. Moreover, per capita income would probably decline a further 25 per cent below the 2005 level. The conditions in OPT exacerbated the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian population. Unemployment and poverty rates drastically increased. The number of people affected by poverty grew from 600,000 in 1999 to 1.6 million in 2005, defined by a daily income of $2.10. The rate of unemployment was 34 per cent in OPT as a whole, and 44 per cent in the Gaza Strip. This rate increased to 55 per cent during times of complete closure imposed by IDF. The poverty rate approached 50 per cent in OPT and 70 per cent in the Gaza Strip alone. The per capita income was 40 per cent lower than three years ago. On the economic front, the gross national product significantly decreased, threatening the agricultural and industrial sectors, commerce, transportation and tourism.

57. This aggravated poverty was increasingly marginalizing the weak, the elderly, children and the handicapped and preventing them from access to a whole range of basic health and other social services. Women, who constituted one third of the PA workforce, were seriously affected as they could no longer attend to the needs of their families, at a time when women's empowerment was so badly needed to cope with missing husbands, fathers, brothers or sons. A few cases of "honour killings" were registered as well as an increase in domestic violence. A new trend became noticeable, as of May 2006, with the harassment by Israeli authorities of Islamic charitable organizations. In Hebron, the Islamic Centre, which was reportedly distributing 25,000 food parcels to the poorest, had all its computers and financial books searched. A number of other Islamic centres were forced to close.

58. The considerable level of destruction suffered by the Palestinian population led a group of Israeli and Palestinian human rights NGOs to file a joint petition on 1 September 2005 challenging a recent law adopted by the Israeli Knesset aimed at preventing Palestinians from bringing lawsuits for damages or injuries incurred in the course of military action by IDF during the current intifada. Following the first hearing held on 30 July 2006, the court issued an interim injunction freezing the dismissal of lawsuits that would have been rejected under the law. The case is still pending.

E. Right to just and favourable conditions of work

59. As indicated by ILO, a slight improvement in the employment situation was noted in 2005, especially in the second quarter of the year, with the creation of 55,000 new jobs compared to 2004, including 13,000 in Israel. Some 37,000 workers had joined the labour force, while 18,000 unemployed had found a job. However, during the last quarter of 2005, there was a drastic deterioration in the employment situation in the West Bank, mainly due to the intensification of closures. In the Gaza Strip, the improvement lasted throughout 2005, likely influenced by the Israeli withdrawal and the easing of communications between the northern and southern areas of the Strip.[8]

60. During the period under review, the public sector accounted for 23 per cent of employment, 16.9 per cent in the West Bank and 38.1 per cent in the Gaza Strip. Employment in Israel represented 10 per cent of total employment in 2005 with 30,920 working permits issued to West Bank residents by March 2006 and 4,961 to Gaza workers. With the increase of closures, about 15,000-20,000 Palestinians were probably working in Israel without a permit. Unemployment rates were believed to be significantly higher in the north (Jenin) and south (Hebron) of the West Bank and the north and centre of Gaza, compared to much lower rates in the central West Bank and southern Gaza areas. Local economic features and the influence of internal and external closures as well as restrictions on movement and economic activity were held accountable for these differences.[9]

61. It should be emphasized that the multifaceted restrictions imposed on Palestinians entailed their economic activity becoming localized, owing to ever-increasing transport costs and impediments on the movement of Palestinian products and, more recently, by a noticeable decline in Palestinian employment in Israel. Local employment grew through self-employment, unpaid family labour, small or micro-enterprises, as well as services supported by locally produced goods. Most of these enterprises employed an average of four workers. Agriculture was becoming a safety net for the people who had lost employment or whose main activity was no longer sustainable. A new pattern was developing, namely the arrival of Palestinian women in the labour market to compensate for losses in male wage salaries. Some of these women had been able to start various kinds of income-generating activities with the support of micro-credit institutions. One Palestinian businesswomen's solidarity group was supporting about 2,000 women entrepreneurs, out of a solidarity network of some 30,000 clients. However, the demand for such micro-loan assistance was estimated to be about 150,000 requests.[10]

62. Should progress be reached in the proposed reforms of the Palestinian finance administration and civil services as well as in the judiciary and the security sector, within the framework of a viable two-State solution, redundant personnel, especially in the security sector, might become available for new labour market opportunities after a period of vocational training or retraining. Therefore, the promotion of decent work in OPT, the alleviation of impediments on the mobility of people, goods and services within the West Bank and between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, as well as a sustainable trade pattern with Israel and the rest of the world were considered to be key elements of success for private business investments and international development assistance.[11]

63. An unfortunate situation however developed as of 2 September 2006, when tens of thousands of Palestinian civil servants initiated a strike to protest the non-payment of their salaries. They included several thousand teachers and members of security forces who demonstrated in front of the Palestinian Legislative Council in Gaza. As a result, all public school facilities were closed on the very first day of school throughout OPT. In the West Bank, all shops closed on 6 September to show solidarity with civil servants. In the Gaza Strip, 1,800 municipal workers initiated a strike on 23 August resulting in a heavy accumulation of uncollected garbage, possibly leading to an environmental disaster. The situation was said to be very tense throughout OPT.

F. Right to health

64. According to information provided by WHO to the Special Committee, dated July 2006, the current health crisis in OPT was characterized by three main factors. The first one was a consequence of five years of intifada and movement restrictions, resulting in economic deterioration, growing unemployment and escalating poverty. Health indicators remained generally unchanged despite problems of constrained access, malnutrition, injuries and mental health issues. Over one quarter of children under five and a third of women of childbearing age were anaemic. Indications of increased vulnerability to distress and mental illness, heart disease, hypertension, malignancy and diabetes, which were the main causes of death together with perinatal conditions, were highlighted. Another potential threat was the emergence of avian influenza outbreaks among poultry in the Gaza Strip. The second factor resulted directly from the interruption of funds to the Palestinian Authority since the Hamas electoral victory in January 2006. The Ministry of Health budget was deprived of roughly US$ 60 million per month, generating huge gaps in the delivery of basic health services with harsh consequences for the Palestinian population, as the ministry provided more than 60 per cent of primary health-care services, including the management of 22 hospitals throughout OPT; the NGO community was running a dozen hospitals. The third factor of the crisis was due to recent security developments, especially in and around Gaza, which caused many casualties and injuries and hence an increased demand for emergency medical services.

65. The critical electricity shortage resulting from the destruction of the main power plant in the Gaza Strip has reduced the distribution of water by the Palestinian Water Authority to four hours a day in each neighbourhood of Gaza, for a total population of 1.3 million people. Solid waste and sewage disposal was also affected by shortages of fuel. In addition, two-month emergency stocks of essential drugs held at Ministry hospitals in the Gaza Strip were running low, especially for basic medicines and surgical supplies.[12]

66. A potential collapse of health services provided by the Ministry would particularly affect the four governorates of Jericho, Salfit, Gaza Mid Zone and Rafah, where the Ministry was the sole provider of health care. The majority of births and over 73 per cent of all surgical operations were performed in Ministry hospitals. Should the current financial crisis not be addressed, further consequences would entail higher malnutrition rates, an increase in mental health disorders, reduced coverage of immunization programmes, inadequate early detection and rapid response for communicable diseases and increased risk of disease outbreaks,

and disruption of reproductive health services with a potential rise in mother and child morbidity and mortality, and an increased risk of unwanted pregnancies.[13]

67. According to another source of information, a number of companies manufacturing and importing medicines were refusing to supply them to hospitals, as they had not been paid for earlier shipments or were uncertain that they would be paid for ordered medicines. Basic equipment to anaesthetize patients and perform operations and cleaning material were lacking. In the Al-Shifa hospital of Gaza City, run by the Ministry, 19 children were receiving dialysis treatment for kidney problems. Normally, they were supposed to receive their treatment three times a week. Due to the shortage of medical equipment and staff — still unpaid and often obliged to remain at home — the hospital had reportedly been forced to reduce the frequency of dialysis treatment to two sessions a week. This had severe consequences for several children who, in addition, suffered from congenital diseases requiring expensive monthly hormone treatments to avoid anaemia. Sometimes, the families of these children had to buy themselves unsubsidized medication from outside pharmacies to complement drugs available in the hospital, while enduring long and hazardous journeys to the hospital.[14]

G. Right to education

68. Numerous recreational, cultural and sport activities had to be cancelled due to the unavailability of funds and the current level of violence in the Gaza Strip. The attendance at UNICEF safe play areas in Brazil camp, in Rafah and in a Bedouin village in northern Gaza decreased by 50 per cent and 20 per cent respectively, because families were afraid to send their children to outdoor activities during military incursions. Since the beginning of 2006, more than 9,800 children and adolescents in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip have participated in psychosocial sessions aimed at reinforcing their capacity to protect themselves and cope with violence. Some 36 volunteers from the Palestinian Red Crescent Society had been trained to lead mine-risk education activities with children, families and communities in high-risk areas, including northern Gaza, with a view to protecting them from injuries from unexploded ordnance. UNICEF recently ordered for disadvantaged teenagers 110,000 school bags equipped with a full set of school supplies for the forthcoming term, distributed 100,000 additional copies of worksheets covering the main subjects of study for grades 1 to 6, and helped about 750,000 college students to catch up with their studies during curfews, military operations or closures. UNICEF also initiated the establishment of about 10 non-formal learning spaces for some 10,000 adolescents in areas with a high proportion of school dropouts.[15]

69. According to another United Nations agency, there was great concern that school facilities in the Gaza Strip would not be repaired in time to accommodate children for the forthcoming term, as there were no funds to renovate damaged schools and buy much-needed schooling equipment. In the West Bank, the construction of the wall was preventing large numbers of children in Jericho, Hebron and Bethlehem governorates from attending school. Similarly, teachers and professors were not in a position to report regularly for duty.

H. Right to liberty and security of person

70. A report submitted to the Special Committee indicated that many issues regarding detention had not changed substantially during the period under review, although the level and harshness of violence against detainees had reportedly diminished. However, hundreds of complaints were lodged by detainees who alleged that they had been abused and, in a number of cases, tortured. In most cases, complaints highlighted ill-treatment inflicted by the Israeli General Security Service (GSS) during the period of interrogation. The question of incommunicado detention deserved special attention during the period under review. About 180 pre-petition letters on behalf of 345 Palestinians and 100 urgent petitions had been addressed by an Israeli legal NGO to the State Attorney's Office and the High Court of Justice respectively to challenge incommunicado detention orders by GSS. From January to July 2006, 94 additional pre-petition letters on behalf of 243 detainees had been also sent to the Attorney's Office, and 10 urgent petitions to the Court. In a significant number of cases, incommunicado detention orders had been rescinded.

71. According to another source of information, the total detainee population in Israeli jails amounted to about 9,400 persons, an increase of 900 persons compared to 2005, of whom 810 were administrative detainees, mainly held in the Neguev, Ofer, Ayalon and other detention centres. Often, IDF transferred to administrative detention prisoners who had completed their formal sentence, thereby prolonging their detention for indefinite periods. As of June 2006, 359 children were still detained in Israeli jails, a few dozen more than in 2005, enduring like adults similar torture, medical negligence and other forms of ill-treatment, including inadequate food and nutrition, and denial of visits and recreational facilities. There were 120 female prisoners, a decrease from 2005; five of them were said to be under 18 years of age and 27 were students. There were also 22 married women and 18 mothers, some of whom had reportedly not seen their children for years.

72. A brief study received by the Special Committee highlighted the pattern of "concealed torture" taking the form of hostile acts and physical abuse of persons arrested in their homes, on the street or at checkpoints and while they were being taken away to unknown places. These unlawful acts were committed by a wide range of actors: army, police, border patrol, special forces and settlers. Two young men aged 16 and 30 were reportedly arrested respectively in Azzah refugee camp near Bethlehem and in the town of Bani Nai'm, Hebron, on 19 February and 6 January 2006, taken to Gush Etsion Detention Centre, south of Bethlehem, and severely beaten on sensitive parts of their bodies by Israeli soldiers. The second young man was exposed, outside the detention centre for several hours, to freezing temperatures with his hands tied to the steel wall of the camp.

73. Another young man of 23, from Al-Eizareyah, arrested on 8 December 2005, testified that he had been subjected to various forms of torture from the moment of his arrest at his home until he was brought to the Russian Compound Detention Centre in Jerusalem. Forced to partly strip his clothes off and to remain in the cold in front of his house, he was later blindfolded, handcuffed and taken away in a military vehicle. During the transport, he had been stripped of his remaining clothes and threatened at gunpoint. Later, in a military camp, still naked, he was photographed by the soldiers and again subjected to degrading treatment.

74. On 14 March 2006, the media abundantly reported on the attack carried out by IDF against the prison in Jericho, in the Jordan Valley, with 50 jeeps, 3 tanks and 2 air force helicopters. One of them launched a missile at the prison while troops used machine guns, tanks and, later, an armoured bulldozer to knock down the walls. The purpose of the attack was to remove from the prison and transfer to an Israeli prison five jailed Palestinian militants involved in the assassination in 2001 of former Israeli right-wing Tourism Minister Rehavam Zeevi. Following the incident, 44 of the 200 detainees in the prison surrendered, two prison guards were killed and others injured.

75. More recently, it was reported that on 29 June 2006, Israeli authorities arrested more than 25 Palestinian members of the Cabinet and the Palestinian Legislative Council. Two days earlier, the Knesset had passed a law allowing the court to decide in absentia on the extension of the detention of a security suspect and the extension to 96 hours of a person's interrogation without judicial control.

I. Rights to freedom of opinion and freedom of association

76. A source reported that Israeli authorities had allegedly facilitated the access of hundreds of foreign journalists to witness the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Such cooperation between IDF and the media had been rare during the rest of the period under review. Palestinian photojournalists and cameramen had often been injured while covering weekly Friday demonstrations against the wall in Bi'lein, west of Ramallah. On 16 September 2005, IDF closed the western and northern parts of Bi'lein, surrounding dozens of Palestinian civilians and Israeli peace activists who were demonstrating peacefully. The soldiers fired rubber bullets and tear gas into the crowd. On that occasion, a Euro News cameraman was severely beaten by an Israeli soldier and had his arm broken. A similar incident occurred on 4 November concerning a journalist from the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera news channel.

77. On several occasions, Israeli forces prevented journalists from covering shooting incidents, house demolition operations or excessive use of force. Towards the end of 2005 and the beginning of 2006, several foreign journalists were reportedly abducted by various Palestinian armed groups or unidentified gunmen and detained for several hours before being released. Hospitals were said to witness regularly scenes of tension between Palestinian police and the press. Police and security forces allegedly prevented Palestinian photojournalists from taking pictures of the injured in hospitals.

78. Following the abduction of Corporal Shalit on 25 June 2006, Israeli authorities imposed restrictions on journalists with Israeli citizenship or holding dual nationality trying to enter the Gaza Strip to cover the events. During the month of July, three journalists were wounded in two separate incidents. On 19 July, a technician with Al-Jazeera, allegedly wearing a vest labelled "TV", was shot in the left leg while standing near his vehicle on a main road in Nablus. Later on the same day, the correspondent for a United States-funded Arabic TV station was hit in the torso and left hand by rubber bullets as he was watching, reportedly at a safe distance, an attack by 50 IDF armoured vehicles, including tanks and bulldozers, against a Palestinian security compound and several other government buildings in Nablus. On 26 July, a Palestinian TV cameraman was allegedly targeted and wounded by an Israeli tank shell while filming civilians caught in the fighting

between Palestinian militants and IDF in the densely populated Shijaiyah neighbourhood of Gaza City.

VI. Human rights situation in the occupied Syrian Golan

79. On 2 August 2006 the Syrian authorities submitted to the Special Committee during its consultations in Geneva their thirty-eighth annual report on Israeli practices affecting the human rights of Syrian Arab citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan, covering the period June 2005 and July 2006. They expressed regret and concern that the Special Committee had not been able to visit the region, while emphasizing that this should not become a precedent in the future. Such a visit would express the depth of international concern over Israel's policy of continuing its occupation of Arab lands and the inhumane practices of the occupation authorities in the occupied territories against the Arab residents who own that land.

80. The paragraphs below attempt to summarize the views submitted by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

A. Past legacy

81. The Security Council, in resolution 497 (1981), declared the Israeli decision to annex the Golan null and void. For its part, the General Assembly adopted resolution 60/108 of 8 December 2005 determining "that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel, the occupying Power, that purport to alter the character and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan are null and void, constitute a flagrant violation of international law and of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, and have no legal effect". The annexation has also not been accepted or recognized by the Arab population of the Golan. General Assembly resolution 60/40 entitled "The occupied Syrian Golan" demands that "Israel withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions".

82. At its sixty-first session, the Commission on Human Rights in resolution 2005/8 reaffirmed the illegality of Israel's decision to impose its laws and jurisdiction over the occupied Syrian Go'an, called upon Israel to comply with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Security Council, to desist from imposing Israeli citizenship and Israeli identity cards on the Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan, to desist from its repressive measures against them; and called upon Member States not to recognize any of the legislative or administrative measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel that purported to change the character or legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan.

B. A further deteriorating human rights situation

83. According to the Syrian report, the Israeli settlement policy and land confiscation continued unabated. Forty-four existing Israeli settlements built on the ruins of Arab villages destroyed by the occupation expanded: the largest one, Katzrin, now had more than 18,000 settlers. The Director-General of the Housing

Ministry approved 1 million shekels to build a synagogue in Katzrin and also granted 1-dunum plots of land to new settlers. On the eve of general elections, the Government of Israel announced a massive project to encourage settlements in the occupied Golan with the establishment of a new neighbourhood of houses and the construction of a new high-tech factory, as well as of a winery and a luxury resort. In a renewed effort to cut off contacts among people living in the occupied Golan, Israeli authorities told the inhabitants of the Syrian village of Al-Ghajar to evacuate the northern part of the village, which meant the evacuation of 90 per cent of the residents, to the southern part, and the confiscation of 900 dunums of their land.

84. As noted in last year's report, the occupation authorities pursued their policy of using water resources of the occupied Syrian Golan for themselves. Israel was using all the water from the Banyas river whose annual flow was said to be 121 million m^3 per year. Although part of Lake Tiberias belonged to Syrian territory, it was used by Israel as a storage and distribution reservoir for the Jordan and Yarmuk river system. Nothing had changed in the exploitation of water resources by the Tahal and Mekorot companies, which had an adverse effect on agricultural yields and citizens' livelihoods, including by the drying up of springs supplying Arab villages with water. Agricultural work was the principal source of livelihood for Syrian Arab citizens of the occupied Golan. The Israeli occupation authorities had adopted a policy of restricting their lands and production, while imposing exorbitant taxes on agricultural products amounting to as much as 50 per cent of their value, leaving very little to the farmer. For the second consecutive year, Syrian farmers in the occupied Golan were able to market their apple harvest in Syria, under the supervision of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations.

85. Fifteen detainees — four more than last year — were still detained in Israeli jails on charges of resisting the occupation. Aged from 16 to 38 years, they were subjected to the worst kinds of physical and psychological torture in prisons far away from their places of residence. In addition, hardships and penalties were still imposed by the occupation authorities on their families and relatives when they attempted to visit the detainees. One of the prisoners, mentioned in the Special Committee's report of last year, left jail after 19 years of detention only to enter hospital with blood cancer and loss of sight in one eye on 4 April 2005. He passed away on 7 July 2005. Another detainee sentenced to 27 years' imprisonment in 1985 was moved from detention to hospital owing to his critical health condition, which was concealed from his family. Four other detainees had been released but were currently living under house arrest.

86. According to the Syrian report, Israeli mines were still a persistent threat as they were laid in areas adjacent to towns, villages and pastures, threatening the population and farm animals as well as preventing inhabitants from freely accessing and exploiting their lands. On 12 May 2006, an Israeli mine exploded near a group of children in the border village of Kanakir, killing a 10-year-old girl and injuring three other children. Since 1967, 364 similar casualties have occurred, including 186 fatalities, most of them children.

87. As already emphasized in previous reports of the Special Committee, Israeli authorities continued to bury their nuclear waste in a wide tract of land close to the Syrian border 100 m from the summit Jabal al-Sheikh, in a tunnel 95 m deep and 5.7 m wide, the construction progressed further. According to a member of the Knesset, Israel was said to have laid in the area dividing Israel and Syria along the

Golan neutron mines containing explosive radioactive material capable of annihilating all humans and living things in their path, without damaging vehicles.

88. In the sphere of education, the situation was as bad as reported by the Special Committee last year for six primary schools, three junior secondary schools, two secondary schools and one preparatory academy in the village of Mas'ada; overcrowded, insalubrious and not fit for education, despite high tuition fees paid by the parents. University students who had completed their studies often had no other solution than to emigrate to find jobs. Those who chose to stay in the occupied Golan were still not free to follow specific fields of study unless they accepted the occupation and Israeli nationality, which they rejected. Insuperable conditions were imposed on the admission of students to Israeli universities. The occupation authorities had banned the publication of magazines and newspapers, including Israel's Arabic press, in the Golan, and imposed heavy censorship on useful books covering national and political subjects. On 13 April 2006, the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) called on the Director-General to continue his efforts to preserve the human, social and cultural fabric of the occupied Syrian Golan, undertake efforts to offer appropriate curricula and provide more grants and adequate assistance to the educational and cultural institutions of the occupied Golan.

89. For many years, workers in the occupied Syrian Golan had suffered from discrimination in hiring, wages and the taxation on wages. In addition, as already noted in former reports of the Special Committee, there were no institutions or trade unions except the Israeli labour union to protect the rights of Arab workers, who were not permitted to lodge any complaints. Unemployment was high in the occupied Golan and most of the workers were confined to insecure temporary jobs, as positions in governmental and other public institutions were reserved for settlers. Workers unable to pay high taxes on their wages were losing their employment and had their properties seized.

90. The health condition of the Syrian population in the occupied Golan has not improved since last year owing to continued lack of hospitals and medical clinics as well as basic health centres. The minimum facilities, such as gynaecological and obstetrics clinics, X-ray clinics and emergency wards, were still lacking. The Government of Syria had, however, been able to open a specialized hospital under the supervision of the Syrian Red Crescent available for the population in the occupied Golan.

91. The situation of Syrian women and children in the occupied Golan was reported to be of great concern. Women still deprived of basic health care and other facilities were leading hard lives with little means to live on when close relatives were detained, subjected to oppressive harassment measures when visiting their relatives in prison, and worried about the fate of their children who lacked proper education and were often victims of mine explosions. Women and children were also among the some 2,500 Syrians who had been held in Israeli detention facilities for the last 38 years. Many women and men in the occupied Golan had been suffering for years from the trauma of the separation of their families, some of whose members had remained in Syria while others were living in the occupied sector.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

92. Despite the postponement of its field visit and as a result its inability to gather direct evidence from witnesses, the Special Committee has observed through other means the serious deterioration of the human rights situation in OPT and in the occupied Syrian Golan. Not since the inception of its mandate in 1968 has the Committee ever confronted such anger and misery among the Palestinian people and other Arabs in occupied territories and disrespect for their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms.

93. The Special Committee observes that Palestinians see themselves as constant subjects of collective punishments in every single area of their daily lives. Since the establishment of the elected Hamas-led Government in March 2006, the shortage of funds resulting from aid cut-off and the non-payment of taxes and revenues by Israel, leading to severe economic hardships for people in OPT, have been perceived as economic sanctions against Palestinian people. Perhaps for the first time, some Palestinians are questioning the role of the United Nations in the current crisis. Moreover, Palestinians in OPT feel that their plight has been neglected by the international community.

94. Not much has happened at the international level since the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the illegality of the construction of the wall in OPT and the subsequent adoption of General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 in July 2004, either to persuade Israel to comply with international law and the ruling of the Court or for the Quartet to work closely with the parties, including other international and regional actors, to implement the road map towards a just and lasting settlement of the conflict. The construction of the wall proceeds unabated and the register of damage contemplated in the above-mentioned resolution has yet to be established by the Secretary-General.

95. The Special Committee supports the call by the Human Rights Council for the dispatch of an urgent fact-finding mission headed by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. It expresses the sincere hope that the fact-finding mission of the Human Rights Council will take place as soon as possible.

96. The Special Committee is also of the view that time has come for Israel to grant compensation for the multifaceted damages inflicted in OPT not only as a consequence of military incursions and operations, but also due to the construction of the wall, which is affecting all aspects of the daily lives of Palestinians.

B. Recommendations

97. The Special Committee wishes to reiterate the recommendations made in its last year's report, and inter alia:

(a) **The General Assembly should:**

(i) **Urgently consider innovative ways to fulfil its responsibility with respect to all aspects of the question of Palestine until it is resolved in conformity with relevant United Nations resolutions and the norms of international law and until the inalienable rights of the Palestinians are fully realized, and to this end provide the Special Committee with a renewed mandate in line with current realities and taking into account the hopes and aspirations of those living in occupied territories;**

(ii) **Request the Security Council to ensure the implementation of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and Assembly resolution ES-10/15 requesting Israel to comply with its legal obligation to cease the construction of the wall in OPT, including in and around East Jerusalem; to dismantle the segments of the wall already built; to repeal all legislative and regulatory acts adopted in view of the construction of the wall; and to make reparation for the damage arising from the construction of the wall;**

(iii) **Request the Security Council to consider sanctions against Israel if it persists in paying no attention to its international obligations;**

(iv) **Ensure that other States are not taking actions to assist in any way the construction of the wall in OPT, either directly or indirectly, and that bilateral agreements between Israel and other States do not violate their respective obligations under international law;**

(v) **Encourage the members of the Quartet to fully implement the road map in such a way as to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the conflict, based on relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions,**

(vi) **Request the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to take concrete measures in respect of their obligations to ensure Israel's respect for the Convention. A meeting of the High Contracting Parties to that effect should be urgently convened;**

(b) **The Government of Israel should:**

(i) **Recognize the de jure and de facto applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to OPT and the occupied Syrian Golan and distinguish in all circumstances between military objectives and civilian persons and objects;**

(ii) **Ensure respect for international law and the principle of appropriate use of means and methods of warfare, and cease its policies of excessive use of force and extrajudicial killings of Palestinians, as well as the destruction of land, civilian and public property, houses and infrastructure;**

(iii) **Stop its policy of confiscating Palestinian land, which affects the territorial integrity of a future Palestinian State, and of expanding Jewish settlements in OPT, which is threatening the contiguity of Palestinian lands;**

(iv) Restore freedom of movement for the Palestinian population throughout OPT by lifting road closures, roadblocks and other impediments such as checkpoints and stop building roads accessible only to Israeli settlers and preventing easy access to Palestinians, in particular women and children, to their fields, schools, places of work, hospitals and other health-care facilities, as well as the passage of ambulances;

(v) Facilitate and implement the reopening of the Gaza airport and seaport;

(vi) Stop building the separation wall between Israel and OPT, the long-lasting effect of which is to prevent the attainment of a just and sustainable peace between Israel and the State-to-be of Palestine, and fully comply with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and all provisions of Assembly resolution ES-10/15;

(vii) Stop carrying out mass arrests and arbitrary detentions and imposing humiliating and cruel treatment on all Palestinians and other Arabs detained in Israeli jails; guarantee those arrested a fair trial and detention conditions in accordance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and with the Fourth Geneva Convention;

(viii) Urgently pursue its efforts in relation to the implementation of the road map, in particular the withdrawal of its military presence within OPT and the occupied Syrian Golan;

(c) The Palestinian Authority should:

(i) Apply fully the provisions of the Fourth Convention as relevant to OPT;

(ii) Abide by pertinent provisions of human rights law and international humanitarian law;

(iii) Agree on a modus operandi aimed at solving the urgent human rights and humanitarian crisis currently facing OPT, and at fully restoring law and order in OPT; urgently find ways to ensure the payment of unpaid salaries to all civil servants working for the Palestinian Authority in cooperation with international supportive mechanisms;

(iv) Comply with the requirements of the road map as laid out by the Quartet;

(v) Stop the current cycle of violence and exert control over Palestinian armed groups in such a way that they refrain from any further acts of violence;

(vi) Arrest and bring to justice, in accordance with international standards, those responsible for planning or participating in attacks against civilians;

(vii) Pursue efforts already undertaken to implement much-needed legislative and other reforms for greater democratization in OPT, especially in the areas of justice, education, health and employment, and

to ensure greater protection of women against various forms of violence, including domestic violence, and women's participation in the life of their communities.

98. **The Special Committee also urges concerned civil society groups and diplomatic, academic and research associations to use their utmost good will and influence to make the present appalling human rights and humanitarian crisis of Palestinians, including the human rights situation in the occupied Syrian Golan, widely known by all available means. Efforts undertaken on behalf of Palestinians by Israeli NGOs should be commended and encouraged, while helping these NGOs to have their work better known and recognized within the Israeli civil society and by concerned Israeli institutions.**

99. **Civil society groups and diplomatic, academic and research circles should press their respective Governments to comply fully with article 1 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and with their international obligations as contained in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and Assembly resolution ES-10/15.**

100. **The Special Committee strongly encourages international and national media to give accurate and wide coverage to the current human rights and humanitarian crisis in OPT, including substantive analyses of the situation and its root causes, with a view to mobilizing national and world opinion for a just and lasting settlement of a 38-year-old conflict.**

Notes

[1] During the current year, the documentation and other material made available to the Special Committee included the following:

(a) General Assembly resolutions 60/104 to 60/108 and related Assembly reports concerning Palestine and the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices;

(b) Letters dated 3, 7, 21 and 28 August 2006 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council;

(c) Letter dated 27 July 2006 from the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council transmitting a letter of the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States regarding the follow-up of the resolution adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States during the extraordinary session, held at the ministerial level in Cairo on 15 July 2006, on the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian territories;

(d) Putrajaya Declaration on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories at the special meeting of the extended Executive Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Putrajaya, Malaysia, 3 August 2006;

(e) Statements, publications, yearly reports and other material provided by Palestinian and Israeli non-governmental organizations;

(f) A report received from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic;

(g) A report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (E/CN.4/2006/29);

(h) A report of the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders (E/CN.4/2006/95/Add.3);

(i) Reports of the Secretary-General on assistance to the Palestinian People (A/60/90 and E/2005/80);

(j) Reports of various United Nations agencies such as ILO, OCHA, UNICEF, WHO, WFP and the World Bank;

(k) Various reports and yearly reports from international non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues.

[2] The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories, Report of the Director-General, Appendix, International Labour Conference, 95th Session 2006, p. 4.

[3] At its first session, the Human Rights Council in decision 1/106 requested the relevant special rapporteurs to report to the next session of the Council on the human rights situation in the occupied Palestine.

[4] See note 2 above, pp. 8-9.

[5] Under the Guise of Security. Routing the Separation Barrier to Enable the Expansion of Israeli Settlements in the West Bank, Binkom (Planners for Planning Rights)/B'tselem (The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories) report, December 2005, p. 29.

[6] West Bank Closure Count and Analysis, OCHA, January 2006, p. 8.

[7] See note 2 above, pp. 10-11.

[8] Ibid., p. 23.

[9] Ibid., pp. 23-24.

[10] Ibid., pp. 28-29.

[11] Ibid., p. 35.

[12] The Health Crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Strategy Paper, WHO, July 2006, pp. 1-2. According to another source of information, the Ministry of Health operates a network of 630 clinics throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, including 230 mother and child clinics, 153 specialist clinics, 197 family planning clinics, and 58 dental clinics, covering 64.5 per cent of the total health needs of the Palestinian population. Other health providers such as UNRWA, the Palestine Red Crescent Society and NGOs provide altogether about 35.5 per cent of health needs, especially in the field of primary health care.

[13] Addressing the Health Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, WHO, June 2006, p. 11.

[14] Gaza's Dialysis Patients: Hostage to Politics, Defence for Children International, Palestine Section, 8 June 2006, pp. 1-2.

[15] Gaza Fact Sheet, UNICEF, 27 July 2006, pp. 1-4.

United Nations A/61/501

General Assembly

Distr.: General
9 October 2006

Original: English

Sixty-first session
Agenda item 104
Appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

Letter dated 9 October 2006 from the President of the Security Council to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to inform you that the Security Council, at its 5547th meeting, held in private on 9 October 2006, adopted by acclamation resolution 1715 (2006) concerning the appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The resolution reads as follows:

"*The Security Council,*

"*Having considered* the question of the recommendation for the appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations,

"*Recommends* to the General Assembly that Mr. Ban Ki-moon be appointed Secretary-General of the United Nations for a term of office from 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2011."

(*Signed*) Kenzo **Oshima**
President of the Security Council

06-56054 (E) 091006

United Nations A/61/502–S/2006/796

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
9 October 2006
English
Original: French

General Assembly
Sixty-first session
Agenda item 91 (g)
Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

Security Council
Sixty-first year

Letter dated 6 October 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the report of the twenty-fourth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, which was held from 25 to 29 September 2006 in Kigali, Rwanda (see annex).

On behalf of the Chairman of the Committee, I am transmitting attached hereto the report adopted at the conclusion of the meeting.

I should like to request you to have this letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 91 (g), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Joseph **Nsengimana**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

06-56458 (E) 191006 231006

Annex to the letter dated 6 October 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa
Report of the twenty-fourth ministerial meeting
Kigali, Republic of Rwanda, 25-29 September 2006

Introduction

1. The twenty-fourth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa was held in Kigali, Republic of Rwanda, from 25 to 29 September 2006.

2. All member States took part in the meeting: the Republic of Angola, the Republic of Burundi, the Republic of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Chad, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, the Gabonese Republic, Republic of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe.

3. The opening ceremony featured:

- A message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, read out by Ms. Bintou Keita, Acting Resident Coordinator for the United Nations in Rwanda;
- A message from the Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), read out by Mr. Nelson Cosme, Under-Secretary-General for Human Integration, Peace, Security and Stability.

4. The opening address was delivered by Ms. Nyirahabimana Solina, Minister to the Office of the President of the Republic of Rwanda, and the closing address was delivered by General Marcel Gatsinzi, Minister of Defence of the Republic of Rwanda.

Summary of proceedings

Adoption of the agenda

5. The Committee adopted the following agenda:

(a) Adoption of the agenda of the twenty-fourth ministerial meeting.

(b) Election of the Bureau.

(c) Briefing by the host country.

(d) Report of the outgoing Bureau, submitted by its Chairman.

(e) Review of the geopolitical and security situation in some States members of the Committee:

(i) Burundi;

(ii) Central African Republic;

(iii) Republic of Chad;

(iv) Democratic Republic of the Congo;

(v) Consideration of the Darfur crisis and its impact on member countries of the Committee.

(f) Inter-State security cooperation among the Central African countries:

(i) Strengthening of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX);

(ii) Review of preparations for the Bahr-el-Ghazal joint military exercise;

(iii) Measures to combat trans-border crime.

(g) Promotion of disarmament and arms limitation programmes in Central Africa:

(i) Exchange of experience in the implementation of programmes for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants in Central Africa;

(ii) Implementation in Central Africa of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects;

(iii) Participation of ECCAS in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and in the standardized instrument for reporting military expenditures;

(iv) Implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in Central Africa;

(v) Establishment of a subregional disarmament mechanism in Central Africa.

(h) Report of the activities of the ECCAS secretariat in the areas of peace and security; progress report on the early warning mechanism for Central Africa (MARAC) study.

(i) Review of the draft resolution on the activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

(j) Exchange of views on methods of work and the programme of work: revitalization of the activities of the Advisory Committee and adoption of the Committee's programme of work for the period 2006-2007.

(k) Date and place of the next meeting.

(l) Other matters.

(m) Adoption of the report of the twenty-fourth ministerial meeting.

Election of the Bureau

6. The Committee elected a Bureau comprised of the following countries:

– Chairman: Rwanda

– First Vice-Chairman: Sao Tome and Principe

– Second Vice-Chairman: Angola

– Rapporteur: Gabon

I. Report of the outgoing Bureau, submitted by its Chairman

7. The Committee noted with interest the report on the activities of the outgoing Bureau, submitted by its Chairman. It commended the dynamism with which the Bureau had performed its duties and, in particular, its active contribution, in cooperation with the secretariat, to the preparation and organization of the twenty-fourth ministerial meeting.

II. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in some States members of the Committee

8. Overall, developments in the situation in Central Africa, particularly in the countries covered by this geopolitical and security review, have been positive since the Committee's previous meeting. Despite a few armed confrontations here and there and a worrying humanitarian and human rights situation, steady progress has been achieved in the peace processes under way in the region, and multiparty elections were held in Sao Tome, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad and Gabon.

9. The fragility of these processes, as was seen once again in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, nonetheless requires that the parties concerned, the other countries of the subregion and the international community redouble their efforts to usher in a new era of development for peoples who have been victims of the scourge of war for too many years.

Republic of Burundi

10. The Committee welcomed the progress achieved in the situation in Burundi, in particular:

(a) The signature on 7 September 2006 in Dar-es-Salam of a ceasefire agreement between the Government of Burundi and Mr. Agathon Rwasa's Forces nationales de libération (Palipehutu-FNL);

(b) Efforts to improve relations between the Government and the media, relations between political parties and relations with civil society;

(c) The adoption of measures to deal with the issues of political prisoners and prison overcrowding, in particular, the establishment of a commission to identify political prisoners, and the decision of the President of the Republic to release them;

(d) Pursuit of the disarmament and demobilization process and progress achieved in disbanding militias.

11. The Committee took note of the explanations provided by the delegation of Burundi concerning the recent arrest of political figures and, further noted that the files on these cases are with the courts, which will reach a verdict shortly. It reiterated the appeal made by the Security Council to the Government and to all parties to preserve the peace and national reconciliation and to promote social harmony.

12. The Committee took note of the request for gradual withdrawal, made by the Government in November 2005 to the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB) in view of the improvement in the country's overall situation. It noted, however, that during the reporting period, clashes between Government and FNL forces continued and sometimes led to human rights violations; however, this situation changed with the signature of the ceasefire agreement of 7 September 2006 between the belligerents.

13. It welcomed the measures taken by the Government of Burundi to prosecute the perpetrators of human rights violations and urged it to bring to justice, without exception, anyone guilty of such acts. It also expressed the hope that the peace accord between the Government of Burundi and FNL would lead to better security conditions and better protection of human rights.

14. It then urged the Government to continue its efforts to restore lasting peace in the country. It also commended the leaders of the Great Lakes region initiative to bring peace to Burundi and urged them to strengthen their support with a view to concluding the peace process in the country.

15. The Committee also welcomed the excellent bilateral cooperation between the National Defence and Security Forces of Burundi and both the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Rwandan Defence Forces, with a view to dealing more effectively with such problems as border security, refugee flows and asylum-seekers.

16. With regard to socio-economic matters, it encouraged the Government to continue its efforts to tackle the country's acute socio-economic problems and resolve serious conflicts over land ownership and use. He launched an urgent appeal to the international donor community to honour its pledges of budgetary support to Burundi's emergency and rehabilitation programme, and to its economic recovery and development programme. It also stressed the need for the international community to provide Burundi all necessary support for the rapid conclusion of its programme for the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.

17. The Committee once again encouraged the Government to continue its efforts to bring about immediate improvements in such areas as good governance and respect for human rights and to pursue the major political, economic and security-related reforms it has undertaken. It invited regional actors, bilateral partners and the United Nations to give it their full support to that end.

Central African Republic

18. The Committee encouraged the Central African authorities and all political actors to continue to support dialogue, resolve their differences peacefully and make every effort to strengthen peace and democracy in the country. It welcomed the convening on 28 July 2006 of the national dialogue on peace and security at the initiative of the Head of State, with the participation of all organs of State, political

parties and civil society, the diplomatic corps and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

19. It expressed concern at the deterioration of the security situation in the Central African Republic, in particular:

(a) The activities of armed gangs, "road blockers" and rebels in the north of the country, who committed abuses against civilians;

(b) Armed groups' repeated violations of territorial integrity in the north, north-east and north-west of the country;

(c) The proliferation of small arms and light weapons, particularly in the north-east;

(d) The growing number of abuses and murders, hold-ups, armed robberies and attacks by road blockers.

20. It appealed to the international community to give the country the support necessary to secure its borders and improve the overall security situation, notably by increasing the capacities of the Central African Armed Forces (FACA). It also welcomed the contribution of the Multinational Force (FOMUC) of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) to efforts to restore peace and security in the Central African Republic and urged the international community to support FOMUC, so that its troop strength could be increased to help the Central African Republic tackle the lack of security in the country. In that connection, it welcomed the European Union's decision to continue funding FOMUC until 30 June 2007.

21. The Committee also expressed concern at the steady deterioration of the humanitarian and human rights situation in the Central African Republic as a result of the insecurity caused by armed rebel movements and retaliatory actions by FACA.

22. In the socio-economic sphere, the Committee appealed to bilateral and multilateral donors and international financial institutions to pay special attention to the economic and financial situation of the Central African Republic and to provide it with the necessary support.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

23. The Committee welcomed the significant progress made in the implementation of the transition process, including the successful completion of the electoral process with the holding of legislative elections and the first round of presidential elections on 30 July 2006. It welcomed the political, financial, technical and logistical efforts made by the international community in that regard and congratulated the Congolese people on their maturity and sense of civic responsibility.

24. The Committee expressed profound concern at the violent clashes that had taken place on 20, 21 and 22 August 2006 between the Republican Guard and Vice-President Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo's security guards, in which at least 40 people had been killed, including 30 police officers. It urged the country's political leaders to ensure that the electoral process continued calmly, peacefully and responsibly and encouraged them to give priority to conciliation and harmony in the best interests of

the Congolese people. In that connection, it welcomed the 13 September 2006 meeting between President Joseph Kabila Kabange and Vice-President Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo.

25. The Committee expressed concern at the slow pace of the integration of the armed forces, gaps in the "brassage" process, failings by the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (CONADER) in implementing the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and the difficulties encountered by the Transitional Government in setting up all the integrated brigades that had been envisaged.

26. Although the security situation had improved in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a result of the joint operations carried out by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and MONUC, which had made it possible to contain and disarm the militias, the Committee expressed profound concern at the ongoing abuses committed by some of those militias in Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu and northern Katanga, which continued to adversely affect civilians' lives by aggravating an already precarious humanitarian situation.

27. At the subregional level and in the framework of the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission, the Committee encouraged the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda to continue their efforts to cooperate more closely in combating the armed groups on their common borders.

28. The Committee expressed concern at the persistence of allegations of serious violations of the human rights of civilians, particularly following the military operations in Ituri and northern Katanga. It welcomed the measures taken by the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to combat impunity and urged them to pursue such measures, ensuring that everyone guilty of such violations was, without distinction, prosecuted.

29. The Committee urged the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to implement a comprehensive policy, in conjunction with the United Nations and its partners, to address the humanitarian crisis in the country. In particular, it enjoined donors generously to support the 2006 Democratic Republic of the Congo Action Plan, launched on 13 February 2006 in Brussels and Kinshasa, which provided a clear, realistic framework for solving the ongoing humanitarian problems in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Republic of Chad

30. The Committee expressed concern at the persistence of political crises and the deterioration of the security situation in Chad as a result both of the boycott of the presidential election and the political dialogue by opposition political parties of the so-called Convention des partis politiques pour la défense de la Constitution (CPDC) and of the blatant attacks on Chad by armed groups (December 2005 and April 2006). It welcomed the peaceful conduct of the 3 May 2006 presidential election and the holding of the political dialogue organized from 28 July to 2 August at the initiative of President Idriss Déby Itno.

31. It encouraged the Government of Chad to continue its efforts to hold a dialogue with all political sectors and welcomed its undertaking to revise the electoral rolls, as demanded by participants in the dialogue, and to transform the

resolutions emanating from that political dialogue into laws and regulations. It urged all political parties to give priority to dialogue and conciliation in order to reduce tensions and calm the political climate in Chad.

32. The Committee expressed concern at the threats posed to Chad's security and stability by the activities of Chadian rebel groups based in Darfur and at the tensions which that situation was creating between Chad and the Sudan. At the same time, it welcomed the efforts made by Chad and the Sudan to normalize their relations, including the visit to Khartoum by Chad's Minister for Foreign Affairs and the signing on 8 August 2006, on the occasion of the inauguration of President Idriss Deby Itno, of a communiqué stating that the Heads of State of the two countries had decided to settle their differences through the immediate normalization of their diplomatic and economic relations. It encouraged them to put into effect the various peace agreements concluded between the two countries.

33. The Committee nevertheless expressed profound concern that the Darfur crisis might spread to the other countries of the subregion and it condemned the acts of violence perpetrated against refugees, displaced persons, civilian populations and humanitarian workers in eastern Chad. It appealed to the international community and the United Nations to help the Government of Chad ensure the safety of refugees from Darfur living in camps in Chad, provide greater assistance to them and guarantee the camps' neutrality. Lastly, it welcomed the holding in N'Djaména of two special conferences of CEMAC heads of State to consider the security situation in the Central African subregion and the threats to Chad's stability.

III. Consideration of the Darfur crisis and its impact on member countries of the Committee

34. The Committee noted with profound concern information about the deterioration of the situation in Darfur and its far-reaching consequences for regional security, including:

(a) The influx of refugees and the deteriorating security situation in countries of the region;

(b) The growth of illegal cross-border movements of weapons and persons;

(c) The worsening environmental and security situation in areas close to the border, which seriously endangered civilians, displaced persons and refugees;

(d) The threats to the stability, security and territorial integrity of the Sudan's neighbours, particularly the Central African Republic and Chad;

(e) The growing risk that the area where the three countries' borders met would become an area of unrest likely to attract more armed groups, mercenaries and rebels ready to take part in any action to destabilize the countries of the subregion.

35. The Committee appealed to the international community to increase its efforts to ensure that the borders between Chad, the Central African Republic and the Sudan were properly secured and that assistance to refugees and displaced persons, the main victims of hostilities in the region, was increased. In that connection, it encouraged the steps taken by the United Nations and the African Union to deploy a

United Nations peacekeeping operation in Darfur. It also acknowledged the necessity of the subregional approach, involving all the Central African States, advocated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations for stabilizing that area.

36. To that end, the Committee recommended the early convening of a subregional conference to look for ways of solving cross-border security problems in Central Africa. It appealed to the secretariat of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to contribute to efforts to raise the necessary funds for organizing that conference.

IV. Inter-State security cooperation among the Central African countries

Strengthening of COPAX

37. The Committee took note of the briefing by the ECCAS secretariat on the efforts made to strengthen the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), including:

(a) The organization by ECCAS of regular statutory meetings of the Defence and Security Commission, which had allowed progress to be made in putting in place regional defence and security structures, notably the Multinational Force for Central Africa (FOMAC) and the Central African Early Warning Mechanism (MARAC);

(b) The launching in July 2006 of the activities of the officers constituting the regional Joint Chiefs of Staff, comprising a regional Chief of Staff (Congo), regional Deputy Chiefs of Staff for planning, operations and training (Cameroon), logistics (Chad), personnel, budget and finance (Equatorial Guinea) and information and communication systems (Democratic Republic of the Congo), an assistant to the regional Chief of Staff responsible for information (Burundi), and officers responsible for report writing and support staff (Gabon);

(c) The ongoing installation of the joint core of the Chiefs of Staff of the brigade, comprising a core Chief (Angola), a G1 officer (Central African Republic), a G2 officer (Rwanda) and a G3 officer (São Tome and Principe);

(d) The existence in most member States of the units that will make up the regional standby brigade (BRA);

(e) The ECCAS secretariat's regular participation throughout the preparatory process for the RECAMP 5 multinational exercise which it was organizing jointly with France.

38. It appealed to the ECCAS member countries to continue working to strengthen COPAX to enable it to play a leading role in Central Africa, notably through the application by all ECCAS member States of the decision on the community integration contribution (CCI) and through the payment of contributions to the ECCAS budget.

Review of preparations for the Bahr-el-Gazal joint military exercise

39. The Committee noted with interest the information provided by the Chadian delegation on the reasons that had led to the postponement of the Bahr-el-Gazal

joint military exercise, which was to have taken place in November 2005. It urged countries that had not yet done so to pay their contributions in full as soon as possible so that the preparatory work could continue and the exercise could be held in November 2007.

Measures to combat trans-border crime

40. The Committee expressed profound concern at the information on the aggravation of border security problems in the subregion and the growth of trans-border crime. It encouraged member countries to continue their efforts to tackle such crime and, inter alia, to develop a concerted subregional approach, the preparation of which could be considered in the context of the planned subregional conference on the question. It also noted the information on the tripartite meetings held in 2005 in Cameroon among Chad, the Central African Republic and Cameroon, under the aegis of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the Central African Republic, with a view to adopting measures to combat trans-border crime.

V. Promotion of disarmament and arms limitation programmes in Central Africa

Exchange of experience in the implementation of programmes for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants in Central Africa

41. During the exchanges of experience among delegations on the programmes for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants being implemented in their respective countries, the Committee welcomed the progress made in this regard in Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad and the Republic of Rwanda, in particular through the collection and destruction of large quantities of arms as well as the demobilization and reintegration of numerous former combatants, including child soldiers. It encouraged the countries concerned to continue their efforts in that area and to be guided by their respective experiences.

42. The Committee nevertheless expressed its profound concern regarding the obvious lack of funds necessary for launching or effectively executing these programmes in the countries of the subregion that are emerging from conflict situations. It felt that the excessive delays and many imbalances affecting the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes as a result of the lack of funds, which entailed real risks of engendering renewed clashes, may jeopardize the immense efforts made to restore peace, security and development in the countries concerned.

43. The Committee launched an urgent appeal:

(a) To the member countries emerging from conflict situations to make the necessary efforts to ensure the harmonious and effective implementation of the programmes for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants;

(b) To the international community and, in particular, donors to provide substantial support to the countries concerned to enable them to execute the programmes according to schedule.

Implementation in Central Africa of the Programme of Priority Activities adopted in 2003 at the end of the Brazzaville seminar on the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

44. The Committee noted with interest the reports submitted by the member countries on the execution of the Programme of Priority Activities adopted at the end of the Brazzaville seminar on the implementation in Central Africa of the United Nations Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons.

45. It also welcomed the actions and initiatives taken by the member countries within the framework of implementing both the Brazzaville Programme of Priority Activities and the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, in particular:

(a) The adoption of legislation suppressing violations linked to the possession or the illicit marketing of small arms and light weapons;

(b) The formation of units specialized in combating large-scale banditry and illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and strengthening the means placed at the disposal of the existing structures;

(c) The organization by the security forces of operations for the collection of illegal arms, particularly in border areas;

(d) The establishment of national commissions and the setting up of national focal points with the task of coordinating efforts to fight the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons;

(e) The exchange of information with the security services of neighbouring countries and the organization of joint actions on the borders;

(f) The organization of activities for training or awareness-raising on issues relating to the proliferation of and illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons.

46. Nevertheless, the Committee expressed its concern about the difficulties which continue to jeopardize the efforts of the countries of the subregion to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, notably:

(a) The porosity of borders, which facilitates the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons;

(b) The lack of suitable detection equipment and adequately trained personnel;

(c) The lack of exact information and data on the type and quantities of arms in circulation.

47. The Committee urged the member countries to redouble their efforts in combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons at the national and

subregional levels and appealed to the international community to provide the countries of the subregion with the necessary support for effectively combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Report on the Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons

48. The Committee took note of the report by the Director of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa at the Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, held in New York from 26 June to 6 July 2006. It regretted that the Conference had been unable to adopt its final document and reaffirmed its support for the Programme of Action.

Report on the international instrument on identification and tracing

49. The Committee took note of the report by the Director of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa on the international instrument on identification and tracing adopted in December 2005 upon the completion of the work of the Open-ended Working Group set up by the General Assembly on the question.

Participation by ECCAS in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and in the standardized instrument for reporting military expenditures

50. The Committee took note of the report by the Director of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa on the United Nations Register of Conventional Weapons and the standardized instrument for reporting military expenditures. It deplored the weak participation on the part of member countries in these instruments for promoting disarmament and urged them to respond to the requests by the United Nations Secretary-General concerning the drawing up and transmission of reports.

Implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in Central Africa

51. The Committee took note of the report by the Director of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in Central Africa, which highlighted the danger of terrorism and trafficking in nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their vectors. It welcomed the idea of holding in the subregion a seminar on the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) in Central Africa, which would be organized jointly by ECCAS and the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa. However, it stressed the need to keep the issue of small arms and light weapons at the top of the list of priorities in the field of disarmament in Central Africa.

Establishment of a subregional disarmament mechanism in Central Africa

52. The Committee took note of the report by the Director of the Regional Centre on the experience of other African regions which already have legal instruments for

controlling small arms and light weapons. It stressed the need for Central Africa to develop similar instruments and welcomed the contacts under way between the ECCAS general secretariat and the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa relating to the launching of negotiations between the countries of the subregion in order to draw up such an instrument.

VI. Report on the activities of the ECCAS secretariat in the areas of peace and security; progress report on the early warning mechanism for Central Africa (MARAC) study

53. The Committee noted with interest the report submitted by the ECCAS general secretariat on its activities in the areas of peace and security and particularly on progress made in operationalizing the early warning mechanism for Central Africa (MARAC). It welcomed the appointment of a representative of the ECCAS Secretary-General responsible for monitoring the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It appealed to the international community to provide ECCAS with the necessary support for the deployment of election observers in member countries.

54. The Committee also welcomed the operationalization of MARAC being carried out with the support of the European Union (4 million euros), particularly the launching by the general secretariat of the process of recruiting the officials necessary for starting the mechanism's activities, namely the Director (Coordinator) of MARAC, the Director of Political and Diplomatic Actions, the Head of the Monitoring and Information Collection Office, the Head of the Analysis and Evaluation Office, and the expert specialist in information technology and document management, as well as setting up and equipping 18 new offices.

VII. Exchange of views on methods of work and the programme of work: revitalization of the activities of the Advisory Committee and adoption of the Committee's programme of work for the period 2006-2007

55. The members of the Committee, together with the Committee's secretariat and the ECCAS secretariat, engaged in an intensive exchange of views on the revitalization of the Advisory Committee's activities and the rationalization of its methods of work. They underscored the importance of holding the Committee's meetings on a rotating basis in the countries of Central Africa as a factor for strengthening confidence and welcomed the existence of the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Yaounde, which could serve as an alternative solution, in case of the withdrawal of a State, in order to host meetings of the Committee.

56. The Committee included the following activities on its programme of work for the period 2006-2007:

(a) The organization of the twenty-fifth ministerial meeting of the Committee in Sao Tome in March 2007, on dates to be determined;

(b) The organization of the Subregional Conference on Responses to the Problems of Transborder Security in Central Africa, Yaounde, on dates to be determined;

(c) The organization of the twenty-sixth ministerial meeting of the Committee in Angola in September or October 2007, on dates to be determined.

57. The Committee gave a mandate to its Bureau to approach the Department for Disarmament Affairs in order to have an exchange of views on revitalizing and rationalizing the Committee's activities, particularly the frequency and venue of its meetings. It expressed its profound concern at the lack of available resources in the Trust Fund for financing its extrabudgetary activities. In that regard, it launched an appeal urging member countries and donors to contribute generously to the Trust Fund.

VIII. Date and place of the next meeting

58. The Committee decided to hold its twenty-fifth ministerial meeting in Sao Tome and Principe in March 2007, the dates for which will be agreed upon by the secretariat and the host country.

IX. Other matters

59. The Committee urged the member countries that had not yet done so to ratify or accede to the agreements on cooperation in mutual legal assistance and in the field of criminal and trans-border police.

60. It warmly congratulated Pamela Maponga, the Secretary of the Committee, for the competence and devotion with which she carried out her duties.

61. In conclusion, the participants expressed satisfaction with the good atmosphere that had prevailed throughout their work and conveyed their gratitude to Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, and to the Rwandan Government and people for the warm welcome and kind hospitality that they had received during their stay in the Republic of Rwanda.

United Nations

A/61/503

General Assembly

Distr.: General
9 October 2006

Original: English

Sixty-first session
Agenda item 153
Requests for observer status in the General Assembly

Note verbale dated 5 October 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Iraq to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General, and has the honour to inform him that the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Iraq would like to withdraw the request in its note verbale (A/61/191) regarding the inclusion of an agenda item entitled "Observer status for the Collaborative Intergovernmental Scientific Research Institute in the General Assembly".

06-56076 (E) 101006

General Assembly

Distr.: General
9 October 2006

Original: English

Sixty-first session
Agenda item 67 (c)
Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives

Situation of human rights in Myanmar

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides details on the good offices efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General aimed at facilitating national reconciliation and democratization in Myanmar, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/233 of 23 December 2005.

During the reporting period, efforts were made by the United Nations to re-engage with the Myanmar authorities after no high-level contacts for nearly two years. Engagement at the appropriate senior level was considered critical if the Secretary-General was to exercise his good offices, especially after the resignation of his Special Envoy in January 2006.

A series of discussions with the Government of Myanmar, through its Permanent Mission in New York, led to the visit to Myanmar by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs in May 2006. The mission led by the Under-Secretary-General met with relevant stakeholders and raised issues of concern to the United Nations directly with the top leadership of the Government of Myanmar. Some developments have taken place as a follow-up to the mission. However, more tangible progress is needed, as a genuine process of democratization and national reconciliation has yet to be launched. While the Government's announcement that the National Convention would resume on 10 October 2006 is encouraging, there has been no indication to date that the process will be broadened to include representatives from the National League for Democracy and certain ethnic nationality political groups, or that the process will be altered so as to allow more meaningful involvement by participants. There is also concern over the slow pace and lack of inclusiveness of the road map process, as nearly three years have elapsed since its announcement and no clear outcome is yet in sight.

06-56143 (E) 161006

The Secretary-General renews his call upon the Myanmar authorities to establish a substantive dialogue with the representatives of all ethnic nationality groups and political leaders. Such a dialogue should commence as soon as possible, starting with certain confidence-building measures, such as the release of a substantial number of political prisoners, the lifting of the remaining constraints on all political leaders, the reopening of offices of the National League for Democracy, and the inclusion of opposition and certain ethnic nationality groups in the ongoing road map process. If progress is made, the Secretary-General reiterates his readiness to help mobilize international assistance in supporting national reconciliation efforts so that the people of Myanmar can partake in the same benefits of economic, social and political development as those enjoyed in neighbouring countries.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 60/233 of 23 December 2005, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General, inter alia, to continue to provide his good offices and to pursue his discussions on the situation of human rights and the restoration of democracy with the Government and people of Myanmar, including with all relevant parties to the national reconciliation process in Myanmar, to offer technical assistance to the Government in that regard, and to report to the Assembly at its sixty-first session, and to the Commission on Human Rights at its sixty-second session, on the progress made in the implementation of that resolution.

2. As reported previously, the Secretary-General's good offices efforts have encountered considerable difficulties since the removal of the former Prime Minister, General Khin Nyunt, and his associates in the fourth quarter of 2004, which resulted in a significant reduction of political contacts between the United Nations and the Myanmar authorities. Having been unable to visit Myanmar since March 2004, the Secretary-General's former Special Envoy, Razali Ismail, stepped down in January 2006. The Special Rapporteur for the human rights situation in Myanmar, Paulo Pinheiro, has also been denied access to the country since November 2003. Consequently, political discussions with the Government of Myanmar were held only outside the country and on limited occasions between 2004 and early 2006.

3. Against that background, efforts were made to re-engage the Myanmar authorities. Discussions between the United Nations and the Government of Myanmar continued through its Permanent Mission in New York with a view to finding ways and means to re-establish high-level contacts. As a result of the discussions, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs was invited by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, U Nyan Win, to visit Myanmar. The Under-Secretary-General visited Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw, the country's new administrative centre, from 18 to 20 May 2006.

4. The main objective of the Under-Secretary-General's mission, undertaken within the context of the good offices mandate entrusted to the Secretary-General by the General Assembly, was to meet the top leadership and relevant stakeholders and to assess the situation first-hand in order to see what more could be done to help Myanmar move in the direction of all-inclusive democracy, sustainable development and national reconciliation. Additionally, since the overall operating environment for the United Nations and other assistance agencies had become more restrictive over the previous year, the mission sought to address the issue of unhindered access for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the people of Myanmar.

5. During his visit, the Under-Secretary-General met with the Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council, Senior General Than Shwe, and other government leaders, senior officials of the National Unity Party, as well as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the leaders of the National League for Democracy (NLD). The mission was not able, regrettably, to meet with the representatives of ethnic nationality groups.

II. Content of the discussions

6. In meetings with the various interlocutors, the mission reiterated the Secretary-General's commitment to continuing his good offices role and, to that end, emphasized the need to maintain a constructive dialogue in moving the democratization and national reconciliation process forward. The effort of the United Nations to re-engage with the Myanmar leaders and to begin constructive dialogue was generally well received, as Senior General Than Shwe invited the Under-Secretary-General to return to Myanmar later in 2006.

7. The mission encouraged Myanmar's leadership at the highest level to take specific steps to make the National Convention process all-inclusive and meaningful. The lifting of the remaining constraints on political leaders, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and the reopening of the offices of the NLD were suggested as specific steps that could be taken in that direction. In a meeting with the Under-Secretary-General, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi welcomed the continuation of United Nations efforts aimed at facilitating national reconciliation and democratization in Myanmar. On the eve of the expiration on 27 May 2006 of her term of house arrest, the Secretary-General appealed to the Myanmar senior leadership to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The Secretary-General was therefore disappointed by the decision of the Government to extend her house arrest by another year, and commented that Myanmar's leadership had missed a significant opportunity to confirm, through concrete actions, its expressed commitment to move towards true national reconciliation and all-inclusive democracy. Although on 6 June 2006 a prisoner whose release the Under-Secretary-General had requested, Ssu Ssu Nway, was set free, as at the end of August 2006, the number of political prisoners in Myanmar was estimated at 1,185.

8. The mission raised with the Government the situation in Kayin State, where to date an estimated 20,000 persons have reportedly been displaced, and over 5,000 have reportedly fled to Thailand, as a result of the intensive military campaigns against ethnic insurgency groups since the beginning of 2006, raising concerns that military operations and associated human rights abuses could pose a serious danger to ethnic nationalities in eastern Myanmar.

9. While there has been some forward movement with regard to clarifying the restrictive guidelines for humanitarian assistance introduced by the Government earlier in 2006, further progress through dialogue between United Nations agencies and the relevant authorities is needed to overcome remaining difficulties. Similarly, there is a need for tangible progress to ensure unhindered access for humanitarian personnel to areas of greatest need. It is hoped that the Government will respond positively to the request by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on 14 August 2006 for a United Nations inter-agency assessment of the humanitarian needs in conflict-affected areas.

10. Political parties, in particular the NLD, continue to be subjected to severe restrictions and scrutiny. Despite assurances given to the mission by government interlocutors that the NLD remained a legal political party, there are reports of an increased campaign directed against it in the government press. Despite the mission's requests to allow the NLD to function openly throughout the country, only the Yangon headquarters of the party is currently open. Meanwhile, the Union Solidarity and Development Association, a mass organization created by the State

Peace and Development Council, recently announced its intention to become a political party and contest the next election.

11. Regrettably, the National Convention, which last met from 5 December 2005 to 31 January 2006, did not include representatives from either the NLD or several ethnic nationality political parties, including the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, which won the second largest number of seats in the 1990 elections. While the Government's announcement that the Convention was due to resume on 10 October 2006 is encouraging, there has been no indication that the process would be broadened to include the representatives of the NLD and certain ethnic nationality political parties.

12. As reported by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, confidence of some ethnic groups in the Government's commitment to the national reconciliation process has been diminished by the very severe sentences handed down to a number of Shan leaders in November 2005. The Special Rapporteur noted that unless the Government addressed ethnic concerns, including allegations of serious rights violations committed against ethnic communities and the imprisonment of ethnic leaders, there was a risk that the fragile ceasefire agreements between the two sides could unravel.

13. Concern has also been expressed over the slow pace of the road map process, as nearly three years have elapsed since its announcement and no clear outcome of the process is yet in sight. The more clarity there is about the time frame and modalities of the road map, the more credible the process will be to all stakeholders in Myanmar. The Secretary-General hopes that all parties will work towards achieving an open, inclusive and participatory process.

14. It is a source of regret that the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar has been denied access to the country for almost three years. The Secretary-General hopes that the Special Rapporteur will be able to fulfil his United Nations mandate and visit the country in the near future as part of Myanmar's cooperation with the Human Rights Council.

III. Observations

15. Democratization and national reconciliation are inevitably long-term processes that cannot be expected to yield results immediately. The Secretary-General's good offices role is to continue to explore fully with the Government of Myanmar and other stakeholders any openings that may exist and to seek opportunities where progress may be possible.

16. The Secretary-General thus reiterates his call upon the Myanmar authorities to take the necessary steps to make reform efforts more inclusive and credible when the National Convention resumes later in 2006 and in subsequent phases of the road map process, including the drafting of a constitution and the holding of a national referendum. Such steps should commence as soon as possible, starting with certain confidence-building measures, such as the release of a substantial number of political prisoners, the lifting of the remaining constraints on all political leaders, the reopening of the offices of the NLD and provisions for the meaningful participation of all stakeholders in the ongoing road map process. If progress is made, the Secretary-General reiterates his readiness to help mobilize necessary

international assistance in supporting national reconciliation efforts so that the people of Myanmar can partake in the same benefits of economic, social and political development as those enjoyed in neighbouring countries.

17. The Secretary-General further calls upon countries of the region, particularly China, India and States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, to continue to encourage and accelerate the pace of political, economic and socio-humanitarian reform in Myanmar. Finally, in the light of the decision taken by the Security Council on 15 September 2006 to include Myanmar on its agenda, the Secretary-General is confident that he will be able to rely on the full support of the Council in the implementation of the good offices mandate given to him by the General Assembly.

06-56143

United Nations A/61/505

General Assembly

Distr.: General
10 October 2006

Original: English

Sixty-first session
Agenda item 27
Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Letter dated 9 October 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia of 7 October 2006 on developments in Georgia (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 27.

(*Signed*) Irakli **Alasania**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

06-56409 (E) 161006

Annex to the letter dated 9 October 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia is authorized to state:

The Russian authorities, in parallel to imposing economic sanctions on Georgia, has begun retaliatory measures against the Georgian citizens and ethnic Georgians, including children, on the territory of Russia.

With the permission and direct instructions of the Russian authorities, universally recognized human rights and freedoms are roughly and widely violated and international and regional acts on human rights, to which the Russian Federation is party, are disregarded.

Even an incomplete list of such actions indicates that a deliberate campaign is taking place given that human rights are violated not by a certain agency, but by a whole state: the Russian Federation.

In various cities of Russia, Georgian citizens, including women and children, are detained and deported from Russia only because of their ethnic background. In this case, there are violated provisions of article 13 (on prohibition of expulsion of foreigners) and article 26 (on prohibition of discrimination) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as article 14 and article 1 of Protocol 12 (prohibition of discrimination), article 4 of Protocol 4 (prohibition of collective expulsion of foreigners) and article 1 of Protocol 7 (protection of procedural safeguards relating to expulsion of foreigners) of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

All teachers and pupils who are citizens of Georgia were sacked from the Russian-administered schools located on the territory of Georgia. There is direct evidence of rough and undisguised violation of international instruments of human rights: article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and article 2 (prohibition of discrimination), article 3 (priority protection of child's interests), articles 28 and 29 (right to education) and article 2 of Protocol 2 (right to education) of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Law-enforcement agencies are raiding commercial enterprises owned by Georgians. A Russian OMON unit, disregarding the principle of ex-territoriality, broke into the hotel Tbilisi attached to the Embassy of Georgia in the Russian Federation. Besides the serious doubts about the lawfulness of such actions, we have strong rationale to state that, in these cases, human rights were also violated, in particular article 1 of Protocol 1 to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, according to which any natural and legal person enjoys the right of property.

The Russian mass media, representatives of the executive and legislative authorities, even high-ranking officials make calls to "clean" Russia's trade enterprises from migrants and to protect the rights of the "native population".

The campaign launched by the authorities of the Russian Federation has already been joined by pseudo-patriotic and neo-Nazi organizations, which welcomed the steps taken by the Kremlin and got actively involved in chauvinistic hysteria and ethnic cleansing, making the process increasingly uncontrollable.

We underline that every fact of violation of human rights, particularly the right of property, will be placed under consideration of the European Court of Human Rights through an action against Russia.

Against the background of such an attitude towards Georgia and the Georgians by the Russian authorities, it is impossible for Russia to act as an impartial mediator in the process of the conflict resolution in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia assesses repressions against Georgians as another fact of xenophobia, which as a result of policy and propaganda by the Russian authorities, takes increasingly wider hold in the Russian society and acquires dangerous forms. Such action in the eyes of the world community reveals the real vector of policy of this country and its development, which eventually will result in isolation of Russia from the democratic community.

We call on the world democratic community and international organizations to give relevant assessment to the xenophobic actions of the Russian authorities, and to strictly demand from the Russian Federation to put an end to the flagrant and mass violations of universally recognized human rights and freedoms.

United Nations A/61/506

General Assembly

Distr.: General
10 October 2006
English
Original: Spanish

Sixty-first session
Agenda items 55 (b) and 67 (b)

Globalization and interdependence: international migration and development

Promotional protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Letter dated 5 October 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In its capacity as facilitator for the issue of international migration in the framework of the Helsinki Process, the Government of Mexico sponsored the Helsinki Process Meeting on International Migration, which took place on 25 and 26 July 2006.

The purpose of this event was to foster dialogue among the various stakeholders involved in the phenomenon of international migration and to provide input from the Helsinki Process for the discussions being held in the United Nations, particularly the General Assembly's High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and the follow-up thereto.

I have the honour to transmit herewith the final report of the aforementioned meeting (see annex). I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 55 (b) and 67 (b).

(*Signed*) Juan Manuel **Gómez Robledo**
Ambassador
Alternate Permanent Representative of Mexico
to the United Nations
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

06-56505 (E) 131006 161006

Annex to the letter dated 5 October 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and Spanish]

Report of the Helsinki Process meeting on international migration

Mexico City, 25 and 26 July 2006

The Helsinki Process Meeting on International Migration was held in Mexico City on 25 and 26 July 2006. Representatives of 18 States, 7 International Organizations and 12 Civil Society Organizations and experts participated in this meeting.

The Meeting was opened by Dr. Luis Ernesto Derbez, Minister of Foreign Affaires of Mexico and Ms. Anne Sipilainen, representative of the Finnish Co-Chairmanship of the Helsinki Process on Globalization and Democracy.

The main objective of the Meeting was to analyze diverse issues of the migratory agenda in order to contribute to the High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development that will take place in the United Nations General Assembly on 14-15 September 2006.

With that purpose, the Meeting discussed the four themes to be addressed in the High Level Dialogue, through a rich exchange of views, opinions and proposals, adopting an integral and comprehensive perspective of the migratory phenomenon, with a view to: advancing in the consolidation of an international agenda on migration and development, which has been in configuration during the last decade, and to present ideas and analyze proposals regarding the best way to continue the analysis of these issues in the multilateral framework of the United Nations.

It was stressed that the High Level Dialogue is expected to lead to a new vision and culture on migration, that favors a thorough understanding of the phenomenon. This was considered necessary to promote the positive contributions of migration and for the purpose of avoiding fragmented approaches.

It was affirmed that short term responses should give way to long term, comprehensive strategies and solutions. To achieve this, it is necessary to go beyond traditional approaches that are limited to migration management and to adopt, instead, integral approaches that take into consideration the causes and effects of migration, both placing the migrant person in the center of every migration policy and project, and taking into account the challenges that migration poses to States and to migrants.

It was recognized that migrants have contributed considerably to world-wide cultural exchange, economic development and social progress, and that they have brought valuable and dynamic contributions to the societies in their countries of origin as abroad, and will continue to do so.

It was considered that, as most countries are countries of migration, when focusing on common factors more than on those that divide them, areas of consensus may emerge, thus allowing the consolidation, in the framework of the United Nations, of a forum for continued dialogue and reflection of the several aspects conforming the international migration agenda, with a vision based on focusing international migration on its multiple aspects, taking into account its causes and effects in countries of origin and destination and seeking an understanding among States based on the principles of international cooperation and mutual benefit.

It was stated that a democratic and inclusive vision of the migratory phenomenon needs, for its international analysis and follow up, the involvement of all stakeholders concerned, in order to help find solutions to the global challenges that migration has, with economical, developmental and, socio – cultural implications – it involves questions such as human rights, education, employment, good governance, health, and investments both in the countries of origin and destination. A

key task for international community is to turn international migration into a positive force for development, and to focus on the situation of the migrants themselves. In this context, it was stressed that the comparative advantage and value-added of the Helsinki Process Meeting on International Migration lies on the diversity of its actors and the plurality of the visions. For those reasons, Participants considered the Helsinki Process as well positioned to provide valuable input to the UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development.

The debates developed according to the program of the meeting.

A summary of them is presented as follows.

Thematic debate 1: Measures to ensure respect for and protection of the human rights of all migrants, and to prevent and combat smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons.

- The obligation of States to ensure the full respect and protection of all the human rights of all migrants, in accordance with international law and international legal instruments, was emphasized.

- In this regard, the importance of adopting measures in order to effectively implement those instruments in relation to migrant's rights and to achieve their universal adherence was underscored. In this connection, the need to increase adherence to the International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families was particularly stressed.

- The need to ensure full respect for migrant's labour rights, regardless of their migratory status, in conformity with national legislation and international legal instruments, was highlighted. Likewise, the importance of protecting migrant workers from labour related abuses and exploitation was stressed, with particular attention to migrants in an irregular situation, and women, due to their vulnerability. There was also an emphasis on the need to enforce labour law effectively with regard to migrant workers' labour relations and working conditions, including those related to remuneration, conditions of health, safety at work and the right to freedom of association.

- The growing need to strengthen the protection of the human rights of migrants who often find themselves in the most vulnerable situations, such as irregular migrants, women and children was also stressed. It was pointed out that actions should be undertaken at the national and international levels in order to prevent violations of the rights of these migrants. Among others, such actions should include the training and awareness raising of Government officials, border control and security personnel on human rights, gender and child related issues.

- The need to fight against smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons was underscored, as these crimes may endanger the lives of migrants or subject them to harm, servitude or exploitation. A particular concern was expressed over the sexual and labour exploitation to which victims of these crimes are often subjected. Urgent calls were made to strengthen international cooperation in the fight against such crimes, through a comprehensive approach that includes measures for prevention, law enforcement and, especially, the protection of victims.

- It was recognized that States must abide by existing international human rights standards when enacting and implementing their national security measures. It was pointed out that concerns related to national security and sovereignty should not prevail over human rights standards and obligations.

- The need to adopt measures in the framework of international cooperation and under the principle of shared responsibility, in order for international migration to take place through regular means and fully respecting the human rights of migrants, was highlighted.

- The need to promote the protection of persons that belong to minorities, such as indigenous migrant populations in order to avoid discriminatory treatment, was recognized.

- The importance of guaranteeing respect for the rights of migrants while in transit, including while crossing borders and in migration checkpoints, was underscored.

- It was noted that there is a need to strengthen measures at the national and international levels, and in cooperation with civil society, so as to combat racist and discriminatory acts against migrants, and to promote tolerance in all spheres.

- The importance of a successful integration of migrants into the receiving societies was underscored, as this benefits both migrants and society. It was considered that Governments should adopt measures that actively promote such integration through policies in different fields, including the educational, cultural, social and labour fields. The key role of civil society in this task was also underlined.

- The positive effect of migrant's family reunification was recognized, and as such it was thought important to facilitate it.

- It was considered important for Governments to undertake information campaigns, in cooperation with civil society, in order to clarify opportunities, limitations and rights in the event of migration, so as to enable everyone to make informed decisions.

- It was noted that mixed international movements of persons require special attention by the international community, as Governments should continue to abide by their obligations with regards to international Human Rights Law and International Refugee Law in order to grant the necessary protection to refugees and asylum seekers, and at the same time guarantee respect for the rights of migrants.

Thematic Debate 2: Effects of international migration on economic and social development.

- It was noted that international migration is often the result of the migrants' search of better conditions of life and development for themselves and their families. The Meeting also recognized that while international migration faces economic and demographic differences between countries of origin and countries of destination (as "pull-push factors"), international migration is also induced by diverse factors that go beyond the economic field.

- The need to distinguish between development and growth was deemed important. Participants identified migration' causes such as poverty, the demand of low cost workers by countries of destination and the under development in the countries of origin.

- It was noted that there exists a strategic lack of knowledge in countries of destination –meaning that they choose to ignore or allow all necessary things to keep the country working- on the other hand, underlined the importance to detach migration from the national security issue thus allowing the debate to focus in a complementary approach which emphasizes the positive influence of migration.

- It was reiterated that even though migration is an historic phenomenon, it has been along the XXI century that migrants have acquired a growing importance as political actors and as such they are also a force to reckon with. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that there is a lack of analysis in the development of policies to attend migrants in a natural disaster situation; the policies should include measures that go from early prevention to reconstruction and rehabilitation.

- It was recognized that international migration impacts countries of origin both positively and negatively. Positive effects include the economic impact of migrants' remittances, the knowledge, experience sharing and capacity building. Participants noted that return and circular migration contribute to enhance the long term benefits for countries of origin.

- Meeting participants mentioned among the negative effects for countries of origin the loss of highly skilled persons ("brain drain"), a situation particularly serious in areas such as health. A call was made to convey a deep study in this regard, besides an intensive cooperation between origin and destination countries in order to implement policies and programs focused on taking advantage of human resources in the origin countries. Likewise, the design of compensatory measures such as supporting return programs –including temporary and virtual (video conference) return of migrants to origin countries in order to transform the brain drain to brain gain, was proposed.

- Among the positive effects of international migration on countries of destination, participants recognized that migrant workers have a positive impact on the labor market of the destination country as they often fill occupational niches in which national workers do not participate. Migrants also contribute to economic growth as consumers and tax contributors. They also contribute to fill in the defict of workers due to the increasing generational gap in most receiving countries. The Meeting also underscored the positive role of migrants in the cultural enrichment of societies.

- The need to implement measures that guarantee the respect of the migrants, the tolerance and its integration in the receiving society was emphasized.

- The Participants shared some experiences related to the attention of situations originated by migration, as well as to the promotion of development in regions with high emigration rates. Some measures were mentioned to take advantage of the benefit of the migrants' remittances in development projects.

- Participants agreed in the importance of prioritizing those initiatives which have a positive effect in creating the conditions for international migration to be a choice and not a necessity. In this regard, they stressed the need for a coherent approach to development strategies and migration policies.

Thematic debate 3: Promoting the building of partnerships and capacity-building and the sharing of best practices at all levels, including the bilateral and regional levels, for the benefit of countries and migrants alike.

- The global scope and the multidimensional nature of international migration was highlighted, and thus the need to address it through coherent and collaborative approaches that involve all stakeholders in countries of origin, transit and destination, international organizations, as well as civil society, workers organizations and the private sector.

- It was considered important to establish or strengthen mechanisms to facilitate the sharing of information, knowledge and experiences among different actors, as well as supporting capacity building with the aim of promoting an integral approach that encompasses the elaboration of coherent and integral policies to address international migration.

- Useful experiences were shared regarding regional and inter-regional dialogues in which joint actions were envisaged to maximize the positive effects of migration for all stakeholders and minimize its negative impacts. Such actions include, among others, the facilitation of migration through legal channels; a broader participation of migrants and migrant communities as agents of development; and the strengthening of employment capabilities in countries of origin.

- The need to undertake a more strategic planning and a qualitative assessment regarding the implementation of migration policies was pointed out. It was also indicated that such assessment should go beyond mere statistical figures and it should involve all relevant actors.

- It was considered that an integral approach to international migration should include the following principles: (i) the placement of migrants, as persons and bearers of rights, at the core of any migratory policy or programme; (ii) an unequivocal rights based approach to the issue of migration, which would include labour rights regardless of migrants' migratory status; (iii) the need to implement governmental security agendas in full respect for the rights of all migrants; and (iv) the fostering of comprehensive development programmes in close connection with the migratory agenda, at the national and international levels.

- It was pointed out that the issue of international migration should be addressed in an open and transparent manner, avoiding partial approaches that tend to ignore or over-emphasize certain aspects of the issue when this is beneficial for some actors. It was highlighted that the adoption of migration policies should take into account the specific features of the migratory movements and establish criteria that give due consideration to international human rights standards.

- A reference was made to several national, regional and international meetings that have taken place recently in order to contribute to the success of the UN High Level Dialogue, among others, the Ibero-American Meeting on Migration and Development in Madrid, Spain (July 2006).

- The Representative of Morocco, as host country of the Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development, held in Rabat, Morocco on July 2006, and on behalf of Finland, Current Chair of the European Union, made a presentation on the Rabat Declaration and the Plan of Action, adopted during the Conference, commenting that the Plan established bases for a genuine innovative and stable association between European and African countries, as well as a new approach which integrates development and security aspects.

- The Algerian Delegation distributed the "Draft African Common Position on Migration and Development" * elaborated during the Experts' Meeting on Migration and Development in Algiers, Algeria in April, 2006, which expresses the need of a coherent and comprehensive approach which takes into account the reality and trends of migration issues, the connection between migration and development as well as the strategies designed among the states of origin, transit and destination that, in order to find long- lasting and balanced solutions.

* Endorsed by the VII Heads of State Summit of the African Union in Banjul, Gambia, 1-2 July, 2006, as the contribution of Africa to the UN-HLD.

Thematic debate 4: Multidimensional aspects of international migration and development, including remittances.

- The need for an increased coherence at the national and international levels in policy making focused on addressing international migration, received particular attention. It was highlighted that migration impacts most areas of governmental activity, and thus should be taken into consideration when designing public policies, through a coherent and principled approach.

- It was also underscored that, in particular, the human rights aspects of international migration should be integrated at the core of the discussions and policy formulations on all other areas of the issue, since respect for the human rights of migrants is not only a fundamental obligation that needs to be underscored in different contexts, but also because human rights issues are often at the basis of the factors that propel international migration.

- In this regard, the close interrelation between migration and development was highlighted, underlining that human rights considerations are a necessary component in order to fully achieve this approach.

- The idea of adopting co-development approaches in order to jointly improve the social and economic conditions of countries of origin and destination for the benefit of countries and migrants alike, and with the participation of migrants and migrant communities as partners of development, received widespread attention.

- It was noted that when addressing the multidimensional aspects of international migration, it is necessary to incorporate the needs and particularities of women and children.

- It was noted that migrants' remittances contribute to the economic welfare of receiving countries, notably to the households and communities of migrants. It was highlighted that governments and the private sector should continue to make efforts in order to ensure that the transfer of remittances can take place through secure and low cost channels and to search further for mechanisms that allow for the recipients of remittances to benefit more from them.

- It was considered that the Helsinki Process can contribute significantly to advance the discussions on international migration in the context of other multilateral fora, including the United Nations High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, by promoting an open dialogue and a cooperative and multi-stakeholder approach to the issue.

- The need to ensure an effective follow up to the discussions that will take place in the High Level Dialogue, in an ongoing and structured manner, was underscored. In this regard, the proposal made by the United Nations Secretary General to establish a forum for this purpose was viewed as a positive approach. It was indicated that the United Nations should play a central role in creating a space to for discussions on the issue.

- It was also highlighted that any such follow up mechanism should provide for an active participation by all stakeholders, including international organizations and civil society, including workers and employers organizations. Likewise, a need to ensure that follow up is characterized by an open and transparent dialogue that addresses international migration through an integral, holistic and action oriented approach, was underscored.